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"BUT NOTHING SHALL STAND BETWEEN US ANY MORE."

THE
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JULY, 1877.

Carità.

CHAPTER XL.

TWO—PARTED.



THIS early summer had been a time of little pleasure to any one in the Square. Everything had seemed to go wrong from the day Miss Cherry went dolefully away, crying with wonder and disappointment to think that her darling should have been so unkind to her, and her brother fallen so completely out of her influence. Very hopefully she had come, prepared to do her duty, and sure at least of Cara's sweet society and comfort—but as she drove away from the door Miss Cherry felt that this society was over for ever. She had trusted in "the child" from Cara's earliest days—and now the child shut up her heart, and would not, even after all she had seen with her own eyes, confide in her. She saw now how it was going to be. James would marry "that woman," which was the bitter name by which gentle Miss Cherry, so full of kindly charity, had been driven by suspicion to call Mrs. Meredith—and Cara would fall away from her own relations, and estrangement and doubt would take the place of affection. "Oh, that we had never seen them!" Miss Cherry said to herself, meaning the Meredith family generally—that "elderly siren" who had bewitched

James, and that harum-scarum son who had persuaded Cara to bind herself to him without telling her nearest relations. For Edward Miss Cherry had a certain kindness. He had been very kind—he had behaved as young men used to do (she thought), as was becoming and respectful—and he too had been disappointed and wounded by the strange secrecy of the young pair, who had no motive to make them so desirous of concealing their engagement; why should they conceal it? This was the most provoking, the most exasperating feature of all; there was no reason for concealment—the parents on either side would have been willing enough—no one would have thrown any obstacles in their way. Why had they made a mystery of it? And James?—Miss Cherry went down to the country with a sad heart. But it pained her infinitely to answer those questions which Miss Charity insisted upon having replies to. She could censure them herself in the recesses of her own bosom—but to hear others find fault with them was more than Miss Cherry could bear.

"You see I have got well without you," Miss Charity said. "I hope you have done as well for James and his daughter, Cherry, as nature, without any assistance, has done for me."

"Oh, they are very well, thank you," said Miss Cherry, with a tremor. "Cara has a headache sometimes; but all girls have headaches—and as for James, he is in perfect health."

"I was not thinking of his health. Is all safe about the other matter?"

"You know, her husband died," said Miss Cherry, somewhat dreamily.

"What has that to do with it? A woman without a husband has just as much need to be circumspect as a woman with one. What are you insinuating, Cherry? I don't understand you to-day!"

"Why should I insinuate—and what can I say? James was going away, because he could not make up his mind to give up going to her; but now—he means to stay."

"So that is it!" said Miss Charity. She was not quite decorous in all her ways, but took the privilege of her age, and often shocked her more scrupulous niece. She uttered a sound which was not unlike a low whistle of mingled astonishment and amusement. "So that is what it is! These men with broken hearts are *incroyable*, Cherry. And will she have him, I wonder?"

"Have him?" Miss Cherry echoed, with something which from her gentle lips was like scorn. She was over-severe in this case as naturally as in other cases she was over-charitable. "She had not seen her husband for I don't know how many years—there cannot be any very great grief on his account. And James goes there—every night."

"Ah! but I wonder if they'll care to marry," said the old lady—"that's different—I should think they would prefer not to marry—"

"Aunt Charity! James may be weak but he is not wicked. He would not do such a thing——"

"You are a little old maid, and you don't know anything about it," cried Miss Charity, peremptorily. She was an old maid herself, to speak by the book—but she thought she did understand. Miss Cherry said nothing of her other trouble. She went and got her knitting meekly, and settled down in the old way as if she had never left the Hill. Well! it was home, and this was her natural life—but when her old aunt, who was now quite strong again, went briskly out to the garden to look after the flowers and her gardener, Miss Cherry let her hands fall into her lap, and felt the stillness penetrate to her soul. The troubles of the Square, the commotions and displeasures, Cara who would not open her heart—saucy Oswald who smiled in her face and defied her—poor Edward with his disappointment—and even James, who according to all appearance was going to marry again;—how angry she had been with them! how she had felt their different faults, crying to herself bitterly over them—and yet how she missed them! That was life—this—this was *home*—which was quite a different thing. It was very wicked of her, very ungrateful to God who had given her such a lovely house, such a good kind aunt, nobody to trouble or disturb her; very ungrateful, very wicked. Had she not everything that heart could desire? and peace and quiet to enjoy it. Miss Cherry acknowledged all this—and cried. How still it was! nothing moving, nothing happening—and yet, ungrateful woman, to be so well off and not to appreciate it! What could she wish for more?—indeed, Mrs. Burchell thought that she had a great deal too much, and that it was sinful for an unmarried woman without a family to be so well off as Miss Cherry was.

Meantime Cara, left alone in the Square, fell into all the melancholy of her beginning. Oswald still came to see her from time to time in the morning, confiding to her all the steps of his progress, and receiving sometimes her sympathy, sometimes reproof, sometimes what they both called "advice." Though she had very good cause to be angry with him, yet it was very difficult to be angry with Oswald—for though he was so self-regarding, he was too light-hearted to be stigmatized with the harsher quality of selfishness. It came to the same thing often, but yet the name seemed too harsh. And he was Cara's only friend. She had not had time to form many acquaintanceships, and she was too shy to go by herself to return the calls, or even to accept the invitations of the people she did know. How was she to go anywhere? Her father took no interest, asked no questions—and Mrs. Meredith was no longer the confidant of everything that happened, to arrange all for her. Therefore she refused the invitations, and shrank more and more into her corner. Between her and Mrs. Meredith a great gulf had risen. Who had caused it or what had caused it no one could tell—but there it lay, separating them, causing embarrassment when they met, and driving them daily further and further apart. Mrs. Meredith was angry with Cara as

Miss Cherry was. She saw no sense, no meaning, in the concealment which she too believed in; and it had done a positive wrong to Edward, who never, she felt sure, would have permitted himself to go so far had the position been definitely settled. Edward had resumed his work with greater energy than ever. He was going forward now for his final examination, after which very little interval was left. His mother could not think of it without tears. One of her two boys was thus lost to her—the half of her fortune so to speak, and more than the half, for Edward had gradually assumed all the kindly offices which Oswald had been too much self-occupied to undertake—and it was all Cara's fault. Thus they blamed each other, not saying a word except in their own hearts—as women will do, I suppose, till the end of time. Mrs. Meredith would have allowed, had you pressed her, that Oswald too was wrong; but in her heart she never thought of his fault, only of Cara's. It was Cara who had done it—a little frankness on her part, natural confidence in one who was to be her mother, and who was so willing (Mrs. Meredith said to herself with genuine feeling) to accept that office, and care for the child and her comforts; how much evil might have been avoided had Cara possessed this quality, so winning in young people! Then Oswald would have been drawn closer to, instead of separated as he now seemed, from his family—then Edward would have checked himself in time, and his thoughts would have travelled in some other direction. All Cara's fault! With a real ache in her heart at the thought of the mischief done, this was what the elder woman thought. So that when Cara withdrew, wounded, and sad, and angry at the position in which she found herself, Mrs. Meredith made no effort to call her from her retirement. She was full of many reflections and questions of her own—and surely it was the part of the children to inform her of everything, to seek her consent, to conciliate her, not hers to do all this to them.

As for Edward he went no more to the house in which he had spent so many happy hours. Looking back at them now, how happy they seemed! No cloud seemed to have been on his sky when he sat there by the light of Cara's lamp, reading to her, seeing her through all his reading, feeling the charm of her presence. In reality they had been full of very mingled pleasure, and often the bitterness involved had overbalanced the sweetness; but he did not remember that now that they were past—they seemed to have been all happiness, a happiness lost for ever. He made up for the loss, which seemed to have impoverished his whole life, by work. Fortunately he had lost ground which had to be recovered now, if he was to carry out his original intention about India—and he gave himself up to this with something like passion. All the evening through, in those hours which he used to spend with Cara, he worked, deadening himself, stupefying himself with this like a narcotic, exciting his brain to take the part of a counter-irritant against his heart. Now and then if the poor young fellow paused for a moment, a sudden softness would steal over him, a recollection of the room next door with Miss Cherry counting her stitches

on the other side of the fire—and the soft rose-reflection on Cara's white dress. How could he defend himself against these remembrances? All at once, while his eyes were fixed on his book, this scene would come before him, and lines of exasperating verse would tingle through him—reminding him of Elaine, and how she “loved him with that love that was her doom.” Thus some malicious spirit played upon the boy—

I loved you and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.

No, he thought with a faint half-smile, it would not be his death. If such things happened once they did not happen now. It was not so easy to die. A man had got to live and make the best of it—to forget what was so near to him, yet so unattainable, and fix his thoughts on law-cases instead. This was the modern form of tragedy. To go and work, and to live, and do as other men did—yet never be as other men. Who does not know the poignant yet sweet misery that is in that thought: never to be as other men—to carry the wound all through one's life—to be struck with a delicate arrow which should vibrate in the wound for ever! And then with renewed zeal he would plunge into his work. What notes he made, what reports he drew out, digests of the dreariest books, accounts of the dulllest trials! I think he liked the dulllest best; anything that was interesting, anything that had any humanity in it, seemed by some strange by-path or other to take him back to Cara. Poor boy! and then when it suddenly occurred to him that Cara was alone on the other side of the wall, the book would fall out of his hand or the pen from his fingers. She was alone as he was alone. Oswald, who ought to bear her company, was away somewhere following his own fancies—her aunt was gone—and her father was *here*. Then Edward trembled in mind and in body, under the force of the temptation to go to her, to cheer her, whatever might happen to him. He seemed to see her, lonely in a corner. She had not even work to do as he had, to force her from herself. How the poor boy's heart would beat!—but then—If she were his he knew he would not fear solitude, nor dislike having nothing to do—to think of her would keep him happy; and perhaps if she loved Oswald as Edward loved her— This thought stung him back to his work again with greater energy than ever. Most likely she loved her solitude, which was sweet with recollections. Then there would break through all his law and all his labour a violent hot pulse of resentment. For Oswald's sake!—who went wandering about, gay and light-hearted, from club to club, from dinner to dinner, and had not so much gratitude, so much decency, as to give one evening out of a dozen to her!

But Cara, as the reader knows, had not the consolation with which Edward credited her. Happiness of all kinds she thought had deserted her for ever. There was not even a fire to keep her company, to make her an imitation of a companion. If one could choose the time to be unhappy it would be always best in winter, when one can cower

over the glow of the fire, and get some comfort out of the warmth. It was like stealing away her last friend from her to take away her fire. When she sat in her usual place the dark fireplace seemed to glare at her like a kind of grave. And when she sat at the window, all the evening lights got into her eyes and drew tears, so sweet were they and wistful, even though it was but a London sky. Cara had once read a foolish little poem somewhere, in which the twilight was embodied in the form of a poor girl looking stealthily in at the open windows, to look for her lost lover, and sighing when she could not find him. At her age allegory is still beautiful—and the very dimness shadowed into visionary form about her, looking for something—for what? for happiness, that was lost and could not be found again, never could be found. She did not think any longer as she had done at first with a half-superstitious tremor, of her mother who might be about, looking at her with anxious spiritual eyes, unable to make herself known. It was a lower level of thought upon which the girl had fallen—she had strayed from the high visionary ground, and had begun to think of herself. She wanted some one near, some voice, some touch, some soft words breaking the stillness; but these sweetnesses were not for her. By turns she too would study like Edward—but then she had no occasion to study, there was no bond of duty upon her. She read *Elaine* over again, poring over her book in the twilight, which was a congenial light to read by, and the same words which pursued Edward went thrilling through her also like the note of a nightingale floating through the dark—"Loved him with that love that was her fate"—but how fortune favoured Elaine! what an end was hers! whereas there was nothing wonderful about poor little Cara, only a foolish mistake which she could not set right, which nobody cared enough about her to set right, and which must mar her whole life without remedy. The house was quite still as it had been before Miss Cherry came—but worse than that—for then there was no imbroglio, no web of falsehood about her poor little feet. Things had grown worse and worse for her as the days went on. She wrote little formal letters to the Hill saying that she and papa were quite well. She went out to take a walk every day with nurse, and according to the orders of that authority. She asked cook what there was to be for dinner, and agreed to it whatever it was. She made her father's coffee in the morning, and was very quiet, never disturbing him, saying Yes or No, when he asked her any question—and sat at the other end of the table when he dined at home. He thought she was a very good little girl—not so clever as he had expected, but children so often grow up different from their promise—a very good little girl of the old-fashioned type, made to be seen and not heard. He had never been used to her, and did not require his child to sympathise with him or amuse him as some men do—and his mind was full of other things. It did occur to him as the summer went on that she was pale—"I think you ought to see Maxwell, Cara," he said; "you are looking very colourless; write a little note, and ask him to come to put you to rights."

"I am quite well, papa—I don't want Mr. Maxwell or any one."

"Well, if you are sure—but you look pale; I will speak to Mrs. Meredith, and see what she thinks." Cara felt a sensation of anger at this suggestion. She denied again with much earnestness that there was anything the matter with her—and though the heat of her reply almost roused her father to real consideration, it did not after all go quite so far as that. He went to his library, and she to her drawing-room. The morning was the cheerful time of her day. It was the hour for Oswald, who came in quite pleasantly excited, and told her of the expedition he was going to make into the country on the chance of having an interview and explanation with his Agnes. Cara thought this was a very good thing to do. "She ought to know exactly what you feel about her," she said; "and oh, Oswald, you ought to tell everybody, and make an end of all these mysteries."

"That is one word for her and two for yourself, Cara," he said, laughing; "you want to be free of me. But no, wait just a little longer. Look here, I will send you the *Vita Nuova*, and there you will see that Dante had a screen to keep people from suspecting that it was Beatrice."

"I will not be your screen," said Cara, with energy; "it is wicked of you to speak so."

"Why, it is in the *Vita Nuova*!" said Oswald, with indignant innocence; "but never mind, it will be over directly; and you shall come and see her, and help us. My mother must come too."

"I am glad of that. I am sure that Mrs. Meredith would go to-day if you were to ask her."

"Not to-day—let us get our holiday first. I want to see her blush and her surprise as she sees me—but after that you shall see how good and reasonable and correct I shall be."

He went away smiling. It was June, and the very atmosphere was a delight. He had brightened Cara for the moment, and she stepped out upon the balcony and breathed the sweet air, which was sweet even there. Oswald thought she was looking after him as he walked away, and was flattered by Cara's affection—and other people thought so too. As she looked down into the Square she caught the eyes of Edward who had just come out, and who took it for granted that this was a little overflowing of tenderness on her part, a demonstration of happy love. He looked up at her almost sternly she thought, but he did not mean it so. He had grown pale and very serious these last few weeks. And he took off his hat to her without a word. Cara went in again as if she had received a blow. She covered her face with her hands and cried. Oh, if it really was in the *Vita Nuova*! Cara hoped the lady who was the screen for Beatrice did not feel it as she did—and what did it matter?—that lady, whoever she was, must have been dead for hundreds of years. But *she* was alive, and this falsehood embittered her whole life.

CHAPTER XL.

TWO—TO BE ONE.

JAMES BERESFORD was full of perturbation and troubled thoughts as well as his child. The romance of middle age is more difficult to manage than that of youth. It is less simple, less sure of its own aim; indeed, it has so often no aim at all, but cherishes itself for itself disinterestedly, as youthful sentiment never does. The death of Mr. Meredith had exercised a great, but at first undefined, influence on Mr. Beresford's affairs. He was as good as told by everybody that there was now no reason for putting restrictions upon his friendship and intercourse with Mrs. Meredith, a thing which had been demanded of him as his duty a little while before; and he had accepted this assurance as an immediate relief, and had gladly fallen back into the old habits in which had lain so much of the comfort of his life. And he could not have left his friend, who had been so much to him in his trouble at this moment of distress for her. But there was something in the air which made him conscious of a change. He could not tell what it was; no one said anything to him; his own feelings were unaltered; and yet it was not the same. He evaded making any inquiry with himself into what had happened for some time; but the question was not to be evaded for ever; and gradually he gleaned from all sides—from looks and significant words, and a hundred little unexpressed hints, that there was but one thing expected by everybody—and that was, with all the speed consistent with decency, a marriage between himself and his neighbour. Everybody took it for granted that the death of her husband was "a special providence" to make two good people happy; and that poor Mr. Meredith (though probably he had no such benevolent intention) could not have done a kinder thing than to take himself out of the way at this particular moment. There was not one of their mutual friends who did not think so; no one blamed the pair whose friendship was supposed to have fallen into "a warmer feeling" in the most innocent way, without any intention of theirs; and who were ready to make the necessary sacrifice to propriety as soon as they found it out. What so natural as that this should have happened? An attractive and charming woman left in the position of a widow, year after year, by her uncongenial husband—and an intellectual, accomplished man, left alone in the prime of life, to whom in kindness she had opened her doors. Some people had shaken their heads, but everybody allowed that there was but one end to such an intimacy. And it was very seldom that anything so convenient happened in the world as the death of the husband so absolutely in the nick of time. Of course what would happen now was clear to the meanest apprehension. Probably being, as they were, excellent people both, and full of good feeling, they would wait

the full year and show "every respect" to the dead man who had been so considerate of them; but that, at that or an earlier period, Mrs. Meredith would become Mrs. Beresford, was a thing that everyone felt convinced of, as sure as if it had already taken place.

It would be difficult to tell how this general conviction forced itself upon James Beresford's mind. The efforts which had to be made to send him away awoke him to a startled sense that his intimacy with his neighbour was regarded by his friends under a strange and uncomfortable light; and he had yielded to their efforts with no small agitation on his own part, and a sense of pain and desolation which made him ask himself whether they were right. Probably had he gone away, and Mrs. Meredith been forcibly separated from him, an unlawful object of affection, he would have ended by believing that they were right, and that the consolation and comfort and pleasures of his intercourse with her had grown into "a warmer feeling." But now that Mr. Meredith was well out of the way, and even the excitement attending his end over, he was by no means so clear in his mind, and the subject became one of great trouble and complication. Somehow it seems always possible, always within the modesties of nature even to the least vain of men, or women, that some other, any other, may regard him (or her) with a specially favourable eye. No one does wrong in loving us, nor are we disposed to blame them for it. So that there was perhaps a time in which Mr. Beresford took his friends' opinion for granted, and was not unprepared to believe that perhaps Mrs. Meredith would be happy in being his wife; and that, in his state of mind, was a final argument against which nothing could be said. But lately he had begun to doubt this; his coming did not clear away the clouds that had invaded her brows. She would strike into sudden talk about Edward and his going away, when her friend with much delicacy and anxiety was endeavouring to sound her feelings. She seemed unconscious of his investigation—her mind was pre-occupied. Sometimes, on the other hand, she would betray a certain uneasiness, and change the subject in a way that betrayed her consciousness; but that was only when her mind was quite free. From the time when she began to have a grievance, an anxiety of her own, she escaped from the most cautious wiles of his scrutiny. She was more occupied by thoughts of her son, than by thoughts of him. Was this consistent with *love*? Poor James Beresford, feeling that this would decide him in a moment, could he know, one way or another, what her feelings were, was thus thrown out and forced to fall back upon his own.

And what were his own?—A maze of conflicting ideas, wishes, prejudices, and traditions of old affection. There was nothing in the world he would not have given up cheerfully rather than lose this sweet friend—this consoler and sympathiser in all his troubles. But he did not want her to be his wife; he did not want to have any new wife. His Annie, it might be, had faded into a distant shadow; but that shadow repre-

sented to him a whole world past and over—the world of love and active, brilliant, joyous happiness. His nature, too, had fallen into the shadows—he did not want that kind of happiness now; one passion had been enough for him; he wanted a friend, and that he had—he did not want anything more. And the idea of disturbing all the unity of his life by a second beginning gave him a smart shock. Can a man have more wives than one?—Can he have more lives than one?—He was a fanciful man, of fastidious mind, and with many niceties of feeling such as ruder minds call fantastic. He shrank from the thought of banishing from his house even the shadow and name of her who was gone. To be sure if he could make up his mind that *she* wished it, all these resolutions would have gone to the winds; and it is very likely that he would have been very happy—happier than he could ever be otherwise. But then he could not make her feelings out. Would she go visibly away from him, even while he was sitting by her, into her troubles about Edward—eyes and heart alike growing blank to him, and full of her boy—if she had given to him a place above her boys in her affections? Surely no. I would not even assert that there was not the slightest possible suspicion of pique in this conclusion, for the man would have been flattered to know that the woman loved him, even though he was conscious that he did not so regard her. But “the warmer feeling” of which all their friends were so sure, of which everybody concluded that it had grown unconsciously *en tout bien et tout honneur* out of that friendship which the world holds to be impossible between man and woman—was just the one thing about which the principal person concerned could have no certainty at all. He knew what the friendship was—it was almost life to him; it was his strongest support—his best consolation; it was the only thing that could make a second, a kind of serious sweet successor, to the love that was never to come again; but it was not that love—certainly not in his heart—so far as he could make out, not in hers either; but who could tell? Weak man! he would rather have preferred that she should have felt differently, and that it should have been his duty to marry for her sake.

His life had settled down into all its old lines since Mr. Meredith's death. He had his business about the societies—his meetings—his lectures to arrange—sometimes his articles to write. Now and then he dined out in the best and most learned of company. He was pointed out to the ignorant when he went into society as a distinguished person. He was in the front of the age, knowing a great deal more than most people knew, doing things that few people could do. His mornings were spent in these refined and dignified occupations; and when he dined out with his remarkable friends, or when he dined at home with only his silent little girl to keep him company, as regularly as the clock struck he knocked at the next door, and had his hour of gentle talk, of mutual confidence. They knew all about each other, these two; each could understand all the allusions the other made—all the surrounding

incidents in the other's life. They talked as man and wife do, yet with a little element of unconviction, of independence, of freshness in the intercourse, which made it more piquant than that between man and wife. What could be more agreeable, more desirable, more pleasant? But to break off all this delightful ease of intercourse by some kind of antiquated courtship, by the fuss of marriage, by fictitious honeymooning, and disturbance of all their formed and regular habits of life,—what nonsense it would be—and all for the sake of their friends, not of themselves! But if *she* should wish it, of course that would give altogether another character to the affair.

This was what Mr. Beresford at last made up his mind to ascertain boldly one way or another. It was about the same time as Oswald, approaching the railway junction, was turning over his dilemma and seeing no way out of it. Mr. Beresford had been hearing a lecture, and was in a chastened state of mind. He had been hearing about the convulsions of the early world, and by what means the red-hot earth cooled down and settled itself, after all manner of heavings and boilings, into something of the aspect it wears. As he walked home he dwelt upon the wonderful grandeur of such phenomena. What did it matter, after all, what happened to a few small insignificant persons on the crust which had formed over all these convulsions? What of their little weepings and lovings and momentary struggles, to one who could study such big and mighty strainings of force against force? A little while at the most, and the creatures who made so much fuss about their feelings would be a handful of dust; but volcanic action would go on for ever. Notwithstanding this philosophy, however, it must be allowed that, whereas he had heard of these convulsions with the calmest bosom, his heart began to beat as he approached Mrs. Meredith's door. If the moon had tumbled out of the sky, or a boiling caldron suddenly revealed itself in the earth, so long as it was at a safe distance, even Mr. Beresford, who was so fond of science, would not have cared a tenth part so much about it, as he did to know what his neighbour meant; which was inconsistent, but natural perhaps. The philosophy went out of his head as he approached the door. Little fusses of loving and of liking—momentary cross-lights, or, let us say, flickering farthing candles of human sentiment—what are they to the big forces that move the world? Is not a bit of chalk more interesting than all your revolutions and changes?—your petty sufferings, passions, heroisms, and the like? Mr. Beresford thought he believed all that—yet, heaven above! how calm he was when the chalk was under consideration, and how much perturbed when he went up the steps of the house next door!

"You have been out to-night?"

"Yes, I have been hearing Robinson—a remarkably interested, intelligent audience. Where are the boys? Edward should come—it would interest him."

"Edward is always at work. He is killing himself for this examin-

ation. I wish he could be interested in something less serious. Oswald has been away all day. I think he said he was going to the country. If we could only mix them up a little," said the mother, with an anxious smile—"to one a little more gravity, to the other a little more of his brother's light-heartedness."

Mr. Beresford did not say anything about the superior interest of volcanic action, as he might, nay, perhaps ought, to have done. He said instead, in the feeblest way, "That will come as they get older. You must give them time."

Mrs. Meredith did not say anything. She shook her head, but the faint smile on her face remained. There was nothing tragical yet about either one or the other. Mr. Beresford was less calm than usual. He sat down and got up again; he took up books and threw them away; he fidgeted about the room from one point to another. At last even Mrs. Meredith's composure gave way. She jumped to one of those sudden conclusions which foolish women who are mothers are so apt to think of. It suddenly rushed upon her mind that some accident had happened to Oswald, and that Mr. Beresford had been sent to her to break the news.

"You are put out," she said; "something has happened. Oh, tell me—something about the boys? Oswald!"

"Nothing of the sort," he said. "Don't think it for a moment! The boys are perfectly well, I hope. I was going to ask you an odd sort of question though," he added, with an awkward smile, rushing into the middle of the subject. "Did it never occur to you that you would be the better for having some one to help you with the boys?"

Now, there could not have been a more foolish question—for until a very short time back the boys' father had been in existence—and since then, there had been no time for the widow to take any such step. She looked at him with much surprise. "Some one to help me? Whom could I have to help me? Their poor dear father was too far away!"

"Ah! I forgot their father," said Mr. Beresford, with naïve innocence, and then there was a pause. He did not know how to begin again after that very evident downfall. "I mean, however, as a general question," he added, "what do you think? Should you approve of a woman in your own position—marrying, for instance—for her children's sake?"

"That is a curious question," she said, with a little laugh; but the surprise brought the colour into her face. "I suppose it would depend on the woman. But I don't know," she added, after a moment, "how a woman could put her children into any stranger's—any *other* man's hands."

"Ah, a stranger! perhaps I did not mean a stranger."

"I don't think you know what you meant," she said, with a smile; but there was some terror in her eyes. She thought she knew what was coming. She was like him in her own sentiments, and still more like

him in her speculations about himself. She had been brought to believe that he loved and wanted to marry her. And, if it could not be otherwise, she felt that she must consent; but she did not wish it any more than he did. However, while he thought the best policy was to find out what ought to be at once, she was all for putting off, avoiding the consideration, trusting in something that might turn up. Mr. Beresford, however, had wound himself up to this interview, and was not to be put off.

"Between people of our sober years such questions may be discussed—may they not?" he said. "I wonder what *you* think really? There is nothing I so much wish to know—not the conventional things that everybody says—but what *you* think. You have been my other conscience for so long," he added, jesuitically, in order to conceal the cunning with which he was approaching the subject—asking for her opinion without specifying the subject on which he wanted it.

But she saw through him, with a little amusement at the artifice employed. He wanted to know what she thought without asking her. Fortunately, the being asked was the thing *she* wanted to avoid. But just when they had got to this critical point Edward came upstairs. He was not friendly, as he had been, to his mother's friend; he came in with the gloom upon his face, and a look of weariness. Mr. Beresford heard the door open with great impatience of the newcomer, whoever it might be. Nothing could be more inopportune. He wished Edward in Calcutta or wherever else it might be best for him to be on the other side of the seas. But, as for Mrs. Meredith, her attention fled on the moment to her boy. She forgot her friend and his questioning, and even the delicate position which she had realized, and the gravity of the relations which might ensue. All this went out of her mind in comparison with Edward's fatigued look. She got up and went to him, putting her hand very tenderly upon his shoulder.

"You have been working too long, dear. Oh, Edward, don't be so anxious to get away from me! You are working as if this was your dearest wish in the world."

"So it is," he said; "not to leave you, mother; but to feel that I am doing something, not merely learning or enjoying myself."

"Edward is quite right," said Mr. Beresford. "It is by far the most worthy feeling for a young man."

But Edward did not take this friendly support in a good spirit; he darted a half-savage glance at his backer-up.

"Oh, if you take it in that light, that is not what I meant," he said. "I am not of that noble strain. It is not pure disinterestedness. I think it is a pity only to lose one's advantages, and I should have some advantages of connection and that sort of thing. At least, I suppose so; and it is what is called a fine career."

"Yes, it is a fine career."

"If it is fine to separate yourself from all you care for in the world,"

cried Mrs. Meredith, "from all who care for you—not only must we be left behind, but when you have got beyond me, when you have a family of your own——"

"Which I never shall have, mother."

"Nonsense! boys and girls say so, and end just like others; even your own, your very own must be taken from you. You must give up everything—and you call that a fine career."

"Men do, if women don't," said the young man, not looking at her. His heart was so wrung and sore that he could not keep the gloom off his face.

"And you don't care what women think? You might have put off that lesson till you were a little older. At your age what your mother thinks should surely be something to you still."

He gave her a look which was full of pain. Was that what he was thinking? Was he sure to care little for what women thought? "You know better, mother," he said, harshly. He was all rubbed the wrong way—thwarted, wearied, unhappy. "I only came for a book," he continued, after a moment, picking up the first one he got hold of, and then, with a little nod to the visitor, went upstairs again. What did that visitor want here? Why did he leave his own house, and Cara alone—poor Cara!—whom nobody loved as Edward did? It would be a great deal better for Mr. Beresford if he would stay at home. After this little episode Edward sat down stubborn and unyielding to his work again. What did it matter if a man was happy or unhappy? He had his day's work to get through all the same.

"Don't think him harsh. I am afraid my poor boy is not quite happy," said Mrs. Meredith, with tears in her eyes.

"That is nothing," he said. "I am not a friend of yesterday; but he came in when we were talking——"

"Ah, yes," she said, but her eyes were still full of Edward; "what was it we were talking about?"

"I am afraid if you say that, it is sufficient answer to my question," said Mr. Beresford, more wounded than he could have supposed possible; for he wanted to be first with her, though he did not wish it in the vulgar way that was supposed.

"You are not to be angry," she said, with a deprecating look, laying her hand softly on his arm; "you must not be hard upon me. When they are boys we wish them to be men, but anxiety grows with their growth; and now I think sometimes I should be glad to have them boys again."

"Boys, boys!" he exclaimed, with natural impatience, "Is that all you think of? Yet there are other interests in the world."

"How selfish I am!" she cried, rousing herself suddenly. "That is true. You must forgive me; but I am so used to talk to you of everything, whatever is in my heart."

This melted him once more. "Yes," he said, "we talk to each other of everything; we have no secrets between us. There is nothing in the

world I would not do for you, nor you, I think, for me. Do you know what people are thinking about you and me? They think that being so near we should be nearer; that we might help one another better. That was what I wanted to ask you. Don't you think it is so?"

He wanted her to commit herself first, and she was willing enough that he should commit himself, but not that she should. She was embarrassed, yet she met his eyes with a half smile.

"I think it is not a case for heeding what people think. Are we not very well as we are? How could we be better than as fast friends—friends through fire and water?"

"That we should always be," he said, grasping her hand, "that we should always be; and yet without becoming less we might be more. Speak to me frankly, dear; you know all my heart. Do not you think so too?"

XLII.

A GREAT REVOLUTION.

NOTWITHSTANDING the directness of this questioning, it was by no means a direct reply which Mr. Beresford got from Mrs. Meredith. It was not a refusal, but neither was it a consent. "Let us not do anything rashly," and "I think we are very well as we are," was what she said, and yet the change was certainly a step nearer accomplishment now that the possibility of it had been mentioned between them. He had grown rather earnest in pressing the expediency of this step as soon as the ice was fairly broken, and had been piqued by her reluctance into more warmth than he had expected himself to feel. Nevertheless, when he came back to his own house, uncomfortable matters of detail came into Mr. Beresford's mind, and annoyed him more than he could have believed, more than they were worth. About the houses, for instance; if this happened, they could not go on living next door to each other. Would she come to his, or should he go to hers?—if indeed the matter came to anything. This bothered him, and suggested many other details—changes of habit which would bother him still more. Altogether it was a troublesome business. He liked her best in her own drawing-room; but then he liked himself much best in his own library, and there were moments in which he felt disposed to denounce the fool who had first thought of any change. All things considered, how much better it would have been that they should remain as they were! but that was no longer to be thought of. How was he to tell Cara? How was she to tell her boys, upon whom she was so much more dependent than he was upon Cara? If the boys disapproved strenuously, then Mr. Beresford felt it would come to nothing after all; and in that case how much better to have said nothing! for he felt that he would not like to stand in the position of a man refused. So that altogether this middle-aged romance was not without its troubles; troubles—as, for instance, that about the houses—which you may laugh

at if you please, but which involved much more personal embarrassment and inconvenience, you will allow, than many of the sentimental difficulties which you are ready to weep over in the romances of the young.

Mrs. Meredith was kept in some uneasiness also by the fact that Oswald did not return that night. The servants sat up for him, and lights burned all night in the house, affronting the dawn which came so early; but he did not appear. This was not at all usual; for Oswald, though he liked his own way, and was frivolous enough, had never been dissipated in the ordinary sense of that word; and what made it more unpleasant still was the fact that next day was Sunday, and that no communication either by telegram or letter was possible. This fact drove everything else out of Mrs. Meredith's head. When James Beresford went to her, she could talk of nothing but Oswald; where he could have gone, how he might have been detained. That he had not sent them any news of his movements was easily explained. Sunday! "I would not say a word against Sunday," said poor Mrs. Meredith, who went to church dutifully as Sunday came; "but, oh! when one is anxious, when there is no post and no telegraph, what a day!" They were all telling her how easily explainable Oswald's absence was; and when they stopped explaining it to her, she herself would take up the parable, and protest that she knew exactly how it must have happened. It was all as clear as daylight. He had been detained by his friends, whoever they might happen to be, or he had lost the last train. It was Oswald's way to lose the last train, and no one had asked where he was going when he said he was going to the country. And, of course, it had been too late to telegraph on Saturday night, and how was he to know, a boy of his late habits, that the telegraph offices were open early on Sunday morning? All these explanations were most plausible—the worst of such things, however, is that, plausible as they are, they satisfy nobody. But it annoyed Mr. Beresford immensely to find that Oswald's unexpected absence took up all Mrs. Meredith's thoughts. She had no leisure for him, though surely he ought to have been at least as important as Oswald. Whatever he talked to her about, she replied to him with something about her boy. As if her boy could have come to any harm! as if it was not all his own levity and selfishness! Mr. Beresford, having an object of his own to pursue, was quite indignant with and impatient of Oswald. What was he, a frivolous do-nothing unsatisfactory young man, that so much fuss should be made about *him*? He was one of "the boys"—what more could be said? and how unsatisfactory the best of women were when this motive came into play! Cara never thus distracted her father's mind; he did not think of her. To be sure she was a girl, and girls never get into scrapes. He did not quite like, it is true, the task of opening this question, of which his mind was full, to Cara. He thought, perhaps, that when all was settled, *she* (meaning Mrs. Meredith) might do it. Women know best how to deal with girls; but to make Cara, whatever might happen to her, into a hindrance of other intercourse,

into an obstacle which stopped everything, that was not a weakness of which he would be capable. Mr. Beresford did not scoff at women; it was not a sentiment congenial to him; but still he had a feeling that in this respect the comparative strength and weakness of male and female character was certainly shown. But he would not say so rudely. He was obliged to submit.

On Monday morning a telegram did come from Oswald. He had been detained; would write to explain, but did not expect to get home till Thursday or Friday; please send portmanteau to Cloak-room, Clapham Junction. "Do any of his friends live in that quarter?" Mrs. Meredith asked Edward, with astonishment. "He has friends everywhere," said Edward, with a half sigh. This pleased the mother, though he had not said it with such an intention. Yes, he had friends everywhere. He was a harum-scarum boy, too careless perhaps, but everywhere, wherever he went, he had friends; and the portmanteau was sent, and the letter of explanation waited for—but it did not come. In short, the week had nearly run round again without any news of him, and everything else was arrested, waited for Oswald's reappearance. Mrs. Meredith evaded all recurrence to the more important subject by constantly falling back upon Oswald—perhaps she was rather glad of the chance of escape it gave her—and Mr. Beresford was no nearer a settlement than ever. This fretted him, and put him in a sort of secondary position which he did not like, but which it was useless to struggle against; and so the days and the hours went on.

It was the Friday when two visitors, almost at the same moment, approached the two adjoining houses in the Square, both of them with faces full of seriousness, and even anxiety. One of them was Mr. Maxwell in his brougham, who sprang out with a kind of nervous alacrity unusual to him, and knocked at Mrs. Meredith's door. The other was a solid and portly clergyman, who got out of a four-wheeled cab, paying his fare with a careful calculation of the distance, which produced bad language from his driver, and knocked at Mr. Beresford's. They were admitted about the same moment, and received in the two corresponding rooms with nothing but a wall between them; and both of them had very serious business in hand. Cara's visitor was Mr. Burchell, from the Rectory, who asked, with a countenance full of strange things, and with many apologies, whether Miss Beresford had lately seen "our Agnes." Agnes! the name made Cara start.

"I have not seen any one but Roger since I left the Hill. I hope he—I mean all, are well. Is Agnes in town, Mr. Burchell?" Agnes was four or five years older than Cara, and therefore out of her sphere.

"I thought your aunt would certainly have mentioned it to you; indeed, Mrs. Burchell was much surprised that she did not see her when she was in town. Agnes has been in—an educational establishment for some time. We are a little anxious about her," said the Rector, with a quaver in his voice.

"Is she ill?" Cara did not love the clergyman, under whom she had sat for ten years, but her heart was touched by that unmistakable trembling in his commonplace voice.

"I don't suppose she is ill; we—don't know. The fact is she left—the House last Saturday—and has never come back. We don't know what has become of her," he said, with real trouble. "You won't mention it to any one. Oh, I suppose it is nothing, or something quite easily explainable; but her mother is anxious—and I thought you might have seen her. It is nothing, nothing of any real consequence," he added, trying to smile, but with a quiver in his lips. He was stout and commonplace and indeed disagreeable, but emotion had its effect upon him as well as another, and he was anxious about his child. He looked Cara wistfully in the face, as if trying to read in the lines of it something more than she would allow.

"Agnes! the House—Oh, Mr. Burchell!" said Cara, waking up suddenly to a full sense of all that was in the communication. "Do you mean to say that it was Agnes—*Agnes!* that was the Agnes in the House?"

Mr. Maxwell was more uncertain how to open the object of his visit. He sat for some time talking of *la pluie et le beau temps*. He did not know how to begin. Then he contrived little traps for Mrs. Meredith, hoping to bring her to betray herself, and open a way for him. He asked about Cara, then about Mr. Beresford, and how he heard he had given up all ideas of going away. But, with all this, he did not produce the desired result, and it was necessary at last, unless he meant to lose his time altogether, to introduce his subject broadly without preface. He did so with much clearing of his throat.

"I have taken rather a bold thing upon me," he said. "I have thought it my duty—I hope you will forgive me, Mrs. Meredith—I have come to speak to you on this subject."

"On what subject?" she said simply, with a smile.

This made it more difficult than ever. "About you and Mr. Beresford," he said, abruptly blurting it out. "Don't be offended, for heaven's sake! You ought to have known from the first; but I can't let you walk blindly into—other relations—without letting you know."

"Doctor, I hope you are not going to say anything that will make a breach between us," said Mrs. Meredith. "You have no right to suppose that I am about to form other relations—I only a few months a widow! I hope I have done nothing to forfeit my friends' respect."

"Then I am not too late," he said, with an air of relief. "There is still time! I am very glad of that. Respect—forfeit your friends' respect? who could suppose such a thing? You have only too much of your friends' respect. We would all go through fire and water for you."

"Thanks, thanks," she said; "but you must not let me be gossiped about," she added, after a moment, which made the doctor, though he was not of a delicate countenance, blush.

"That is all very well," he said, "but those who have so many friends, and friends so warmly interested, must expect a little talk. It has been spoken of, that there was something, that there might be—in short, that Mr. Beresford and you—forgive me! I don't mean to say that it would not be most suitable. Everybody knows how fond he is of you—and not much wonder."

"Indeed, indeed you must not talk to me so," cried Mrs. Meredith, distressed; "my affairs are not public business, Mr. Maxwell."

"I came to tell you," he said, doggedly, "something you ought to know. I have no dislike to James Beresford. On the contrary, we are old friends; we were boys together. I did my best to shelter him from any reproach at the time. Everything I could do I did, and I think I succeeded. Perhaps now when one comes to reflect, it would have been better if I had not succeeded so well. But I could not stand by and see him ruined, see his peace of mind destroyed."

"Are you talking of Mr. Beresford? Have you lost your senses, doctor? what do you mean?"

"You remember all that happened when Mrs. Beresford died?"

"I remember—oh yes—poor Annie! how she suffered, poor soul, and how truly he mourned for her—how heart-broken he was."

"He had occasion," said the doctor, grimly.

"Had occasion! I cannot imagine what you mean—there was never a better husband," said Mrs. Meredith, with some fervour; "never one who loved a woman better, or was more tender with her."

"Too tender. I am not saying that I condemn him absolutely. There are cases in which in one's heart one might approve. Perhaps his was one of these cases; but anyhow, Mrs. Meredith, you ought to know."

She got impatient, for she too had the feeling that to see her friend's faults herself was one thing, but to have him found fault with quite another. "I should have thought that I knew Mr. Beresford quite as well as you did, doctor," she said, trying to give a lighter tone to the conversation. "I have certainly seen a great deal more of him for all these years."

"You could not know this," said Mr. Maxwell, "nor would I have told you but for the extremity of the case. Listen! She might have lingered I cannot tell how long—weeks, months—it was even possible years."

"Yes!" the assent was no assent, but an exclamation of excitement and wonder.

"I believe he meant it for the best. She was mad about having something given to her to put her out of her misery, as soon as we knew that she was past hope. Mrs. Meredith, I feel bound to tell you—when you know you can judge for yourself. He must have given her something that day after the consultation. It is no use mincing words—he must have given her—her death."

"Doctor! do you know what you are saying?" She rose up from her chair—then sank back in it, looking as if she were about to faint.

"I know too well what I am saying. I huddled it up that there might be no inquiry. I don't doubt she insisted upon it, and I don't blame him. No, I should not have had the courage to do it, but I don't blame him—altogether. It is a very difficult question. But you ought not to marry him—to be allowed to marry him in ignorance."

She made no answer. The shock came upon her with all the more force that her mind was already weakened by anxiety. Given her death! what did that mean? Did it mean that he had killed poor Annie, this man who was her dearest friend? A shiver shook all her frame. "I think you must be wrong. I hope you are wrong," she said. It was all she could do to keep her teeth from chattering. The sudden horror chilled and froze her. "Oh, Mr. Maxwell, he never could have done it! No, no, I will never believe it," she said.

"But I know it," said the doctor; "there could be no doubt of it; I could not have been deceived, and it was no crime in my eyes. He did it in love and kindness—he did it to serve her. But still no woman should marry him, without knowing at least——"

"There was never any question of that," she said hurriedly, in the commotion of her mind. Then it seemed cowardly of her to forsake him. She paused. "He is worthy of any woman's confidence. I will not hear a word against him. He did not do it. I am sure he did not do it! or, if he did, he was not to blame."

The words had not left her lips when the door was opened and the subject of this strange conversation, Mr. Beresford himself, came into the room. They were both too agitated for concealment. She looked at the doctor with sudden terror. She was afraid of a quarrel, as women so often are. But Maxwell himself was too much moved to make any pretences. He rose up suddenly, with an involuntary start; but he was shaken out of ordinary caution by the excitement of what he had done. He went up to the new-comer, who regarded him with quiet surprise, without any salutation or form of politeness. "Beresford," he said, "I will not deceive you. I have been telling her what it is right she should know. I don't judge you; I don't condemn you; but whatever happens, she has a right to know."

It is one of the penalties or privileges of excitement that it ignores ignorance so to speak, and expects all the world to understand its position at a glance. James Beresford gazed with calm though quiet astonishment upon the man who advanced to meet him with tragedy in his tone.

"What is the matter?" he said, with the simplicity of surprise. Then seeing how pale Mrs. Meredith was, he went on with some anxiety, "Not anything wrong with Oswald? I trust not that?"

Mrs. Meredith stirred in her chair and held out her hand to him. She could not rise. She looked at him with an agitated smile. "I put perfect faith in you, perfect faith!" she said, "notwithstanding what any one may say."

"In me!" he said, looking from one to another. He could not imagine what they meant.

"Beresford," said Maxwell again, "I will not hide it from you. It has been in my mind all this time. I have never been able to look upon you as I did before; at a crisis like this I could hold my tongue no longer. I have been telling her all that happened at the death of your first poor wife."

"My first—!" the exclamation was under his breath, and Maxwell thought he was overcome with horror by the recollection; but that was not what he was thinking of: his first wife!—there was something sickening in the words. Was this his Annie that was meant? It seemed profanation, sacrilege. He heard nothing but that word. Maxwell did not understand him, but there was another who did. The doctor went on.

"I have never said a word about it till this day, and never would but for what was coming. You know that I took the responsibility, and kept you free from question at the time."

"What does he mean?" This question, after a wondering gaze at the other, Beresford addressed to Mrs. Meredith behind him. "All this is a puzzle to me, and not a pleasant one; what does he mean?"

"This is too much," said the doctor. "Be a man, and stand to it now at least. I have not blamed you, though I would not have done it myself. I have told her that you consented—to what I have no doubt was poor Mrs. Beresford's prayer—and gave her—her death ——"

"I—gave her her death—you are mad, Maxwell! I, who would have died a dozen times over to save her!"

"There is no inconsistency in that. You could not save her, and you gave her—what? I never inquired. Anyhow it killed her, poor girl! It was what she wanted. Am I blaming you? But, James Beresford, whatever may have been in the past, it is your duty to be open now, and she ought to know."

"My God, will you not listen to me?" cried Beresford, driven to despair. He had tried to stop him, to interrupt him, but in vain. Maxwell had only spoken out louder and stronger. He had determined to do it. He was absolutely without doubts on the matter, and he was resolute not to be silenced. "She ought to know," he went on saying under his breath to himself.

"But it is not true. It is an invention, it is a mistake! I do anything against her dear life!—even in suffering, even in misery, was she not everything to me?"

"That is all very well to say. You did it in love, not in hatred, I acknowledge that. Beresford, no one here will betray you. Why not be bold and own to what you did? I could not be deceived; it was from your hand and no other your wife got her death. How could I, her doctor, be deceived?"

"Dr. Maxwell," said a low voice from the door; and they all started with a violent shock, as if it had been Annie Beresford herself come back from the grave. Mrs. Meredith rose hastily and went towards this

strange apparition. It was Cara, with cheeks perfectly colourless, with blue eyes dilated, standing as she had entered, transfixed by those terrible words. But the girl took no notice of her friend's rush towards her. She put out her hand to put Mrs. Meredith away, and kept her eyes fixed on the doctor, as if there was no one else in the room.

"Dr. Maxwell," said Cara, her young bosom heaving, "I have come just in time. You are making a great, great mistake, for that is not true."

"Cara, child, go away, go away; I never meant this for you."

"No one knows but me," she said; "I was in the room all the time. I have never forgotten one thing, nor a word she said. She wanted him to do it, but he would not. He rushed away. I did not understand then what it meant."

The girl stood trembling, without any support, so slight, so young, so fragile, with her pale face. Her father had scarcely thought of Cara before since she was the plaything of his younger life. All at once his eyes seemed to be opened, and his heart. He went to her by an irresistible impulse, and put his arm round her. Love seemed to come to life in him with very terror of what he was about to hear.

"It was not you!" he said, with a low cry of anguish; "it was not you!"

"She would not let me," said Cara. "I asked to do it, but she would not let me. She looked up—to God," cried the girl, the tears rushing to her eyes, "and took it. Did not He know everything? *You* would not be angry, papa? you would not cast me away if I had taken something to get free of pain? Would He? He was her father too."

"Oh, Cara, no one blames her—no one blames her!" said Mrs. Meredith, with unrestrained tears.

"She looked up to God," said the girl, with her voice full of awe. "She said I was to tell you; but I did not understand what it meant then, and afterwards I could not speak. It has always seemed to stand between us, papa, that I had this to tell you and could not speak."

"My child," said the father, his lips trembling, "it has been my fault; but nothing shall stand between us any more."

The two others looked on for a moment with conflicting feelings. Mrs. Meredith looked at them with generous tears and satisfaction, yet with a faint pang. *That* was over now. She had always intended it should end thus; but yet for the moment, such is the strange constitution of the heart, it gave her a passing pang. As for the doctor, he gathered his gloves and his hat together with great confusion. He had made a fool of himself. Whatever the others might do, how could he contemplate this solemn disclosure he had come to make, which had been turned into the officious interference of a busybody? He took no leave of anyone; but when they were all engaged with each other, made a bolt for the door of the back drawing-room, and got out, very red, very uncomfortable, and full of self-disgust. He was touched too by the scene which had been so unexpectedly brought before him, and felt tears, very

unusual to him, tingling in the corners of his eyes. He met Edward on the stairs; but Edward was too much preoccupied to observe how Maxwell was looking.

"Do you know," he said, "if Miss Beresford is in the drawing-room? There is a gentleman waiting for her downstairs."

"If you mean Cara," said the doctor, "she is there, and the mistress of the situation, I can tell you. Oh, never mind; I can let myself out. You'll find them all there."

Edward stared a little, but went on to deliver his message. "I hope I am not disturbing any one," he said, in the formal manner which he had put on; "but there is some one, very impatient, waiting for Miss Beresford—I mean Cara," he added, half ashamed of himself, "downstairs."

Cara roused herself from her father's arm. It revived her more than anything else to see that Edward was turning away again to leave the room. She shook the tears from her eyes, and roused herself into sudden energy. "That was why I came," she said. "Oh, Mrs. Meredith, where is Oswald? We must find him, or they will all break their hearts."

"Who—you, Cara, my darling? no one shall break your heart."

"No, no," she cried, with a little start of impatience. "It is time this was over. He never would tell you the truth. Oh, we must find him, wherever he is, for Agnes has gone too."

They all gathered about with looks of wonder, Edward making but one step from the door where he stood. His countenance gleamed over with a sudden light; he put out his hands to her unawares.

"Agnes—who is Agnes?" said Mrs. Meredith. "Oh, Cara, what does it all mean? I know nothing about him—where he is. He was to come back to-day."

"Agnes is Agnes Burchell," said Cara. "He has been telling me of her all this time. He has been spending his whole time going after her. And she is gone too, and it is her father who is downstairs. Oh, think how we can find them! Her father is very anxious. Oswald should not have done it," said Cara, with the solemnity of her age. "I always begged him, and he always promised, to ask you to go."

"This is extraordinary news," said Mrs. Meredith, dropping into the nearest chair. She was trembling with this renewed agitation. "And you knew it, Cara; you have been his confidant? Oh, what a strange mistake we have all made!"

"It was not my fault," said Cara, softly. She gave a furtive glance at Edward as she spoke, and his mother looked at him too. Edward's countenance was transformed, his eyes were lit up, smiles trembling like an illumination over his face. Mrs. Meredith's heart gave a leap in her motherly bosom. She might have been wounded that it was none of her doing; but she was too generous for so poor a thought. He will not go to India now, she said to herself in her heart. The pang which Cara had given her unwittingly was nothing to the compensation thus received from her equally unconscious hands.

Paus Philistia.

"Dum doceo insanire omnes, huc propius nec vos ordine adite,"

"Er ist, er ist er,
Ein Philister,"

says the German student song. The word has become so familiar, since Mr. Matthew Arnold introduced it, that it has almost become strange again, and the finer sort of people spare to use it. The original use was simple: the Philistine was the shopkeeper, the *bourgeois*, the *épiciar*, whom the University man was bound to hate and despise; "Professoren, Philister, und Vieh," the categories comprehending the population of the University town. Heine applied the word to the rest of his countrymen, and meant by it the ordinary German, whether learned or unlearned, who held the ordinary creed of the Germans—solid and settled in his opinions, preferring Schiller to Goethe, and the *Allgemeine Zeitung* to either; enjoying such a humdrum, rational, patriotic life as is described by D. F. Strauss in his *Old and New Faith*, not necessarily either illiberal or stupid, but capable of accepting implicitly the most illiberal and stupid conclusions if they come recommended by the proper names. The Philistine is the opponent of the chosen seed, the representative of mediocrity, who, from the strong position of the Usual, makes war upon ideas. Translated into English we recognise him at once. He is, in short, that British Public whose organ is *The Times*. He is not to be known by any kind or degree of opinions; he may be Conservative or Liberal, Churchman or Dissenter, of town or country, of any profession or age; he looks on things in a homely English spirit, pays his debts, reads the paper, hates humbug, discharges all the duties of a man and a Christian. He lives respected and dies regretted, and has never had a thought, or done an action, that was not commonplace, or known what it is *cæli conveza tueri*. The note of these people is stupidity of different degrees; they are not malicious even when they are most brutal and noisy. They are declared enemies dwelling within their own border, unable to creep into the camp and corrupt, but serving to keep the defenders on their guard.

First, then, as we are concerned with the British not the German Philistine, let us glorify that splendid common sense of *The Times*, that plain John Bull, whose instincts are always reasonable, whose reasons and actions are as often as not unreasonable. When I see a particularly ante-ideal article in *The Times* I look upon it as a measure

of the distance between public opinion and enlightened opinion, and as showing the strength and weakness of each. *The Times*, i.e. the influential Englishman, is stupid but manly; the enlightened are the leaders, and must lead, but as a rule they want either the manliness of courage or the manliness of patience. The rule of majorities is good, not because majorities are wise, but because they indicate what will be endured by the stupid. New things require to be understood before they can be used; the wisest legislation is that which makes new things easy of comprehension, or removes obstacles to understanding. "That which is settled by custom," says Bacon, "though it be not good, yet at least it is fit. . . . Whereas new things piece not so well." They must endure the open opposition of the stupid, the ridicule of the clever-stupid, the border Philistines, who are wise only in their own generation, but are wise in that. I recognise and admire Mr. M. Arnold's brilliant parable of Sancho Panza and Don Quixote, the sublime idealist checked and thwarted by the blundering clown, who nevertheless must follow his lead; but where would Don Quixote be without Sancho Panza? Our treasures are all in earthen vessels; in this survival-of-the-fittest world it is unreasonable to complain of conditions which ensure toughness, unreasonable to dislike the very qualities which make progress possible. Don Quixote, without the discipline provided by Sancho Panza, curates, housekeepers, muleteers, would go farther but fare worse. He might even become contemptible; but he survives the opposition and ridicule which would crush an imitator, a mere Baratarian, because he has with him something permanent which will survive, not in spite of, but because of, opposition and ridicule. Radicals and Utopians, dreamers and schemers of all kinds, make the grand mistake of considering their own motives only. The great world, the uninstructed common sense of the public, makes the opposite mistake of considering methods only, and disregarding motives. But this mistake is less dangerous to society than the other up to a certain point. When the Philistine has become a pedant, and defends conservatism on principle, then he departs from the ground of established convenience and practice which is his only safe position, and becomes subject to the criticism of his own class; but till then he is justified in asking at each step proposed to him how will it work? what shall I get by giving up this? and he requires, and is right in requiring, practical arguments such as the common intellect can understand before he will give up what, though it be not good, is yet fit.

There were many degrees among Philistines in the old time; all were not men of six fingers and six toes, monsters, of no proportion, bawling out their hatred of the Hebrews. So there are degrees of stupidity; and we need a finer test. We have all learnt from Mr. M. Arnold that the note of Philistia is provincialism. One who invents tests exposes himself to be tried by them, and Mr. Swinburne's delicate application of this very test has perhaps tinged the genial critic's cheek with an unwonted blush. But if Mr. M. Arnold is provincial, so much

the better for the *Vie de Province*. Hans Andersen's story of the *True Princess and the Pea* has disposed of criticism of this kind, which is only meant to amuse, not to make a serious assault. The test of provincialism will do well enough. It will include all those to whom their own view of life is sufficient, and who have not enough curiosity and tolerance to inquire how much good there may be to come out of Nazareth. The provincial or clever-stupid class combine often with the vulgar-stupid class to crush novelties. They both apply, and themselves fall under, the discipline of stupidity, which requires that new things should be made plain, and the discipline of ridicule, which requires that new things should be made agreeable to common sense. But because they dwell in a border land, neither true Philistia nor the inherited portion of the Tribes, they are less easy to recognise, and show themselves under different characters and names, and require careful inspection.

The second class of Philistines, who live on the border, and are alternately enlightened and stupid, both receiving and giving their share of the discipline which Philistia administers, are the guides and teachers of the stupid, always a little ahead in general intelligence, but apt to lapse into stupidity from imperfect theorising. They are sometimes confounded with the stupid whom they chastise; oftener they pass into the ranks of a clique, forgetting their true office, which is to chastise not the stupid only, but in their different degrees all members of cliques and promoters of views—politicians, artists, dons, schoolmasters, and other professional people, to whom their own *Krähwinkel* or *Entepfuhl* is sacred. It may be laid down as a general rule that nine out of ten people are professional, and therefore vulnerable, if it be but in the heel. We all talk shop with more avidity than anything else, though we profess to dislike it and avoid it; and as soon as we yield to the temptation of talking shop we need the Philistine at our elbow to chastise us. Happily he is never far off, and the part is one that is easily taken. Our dearest friend will turn Philistine, put on the square cap, and seize the rod at a moment's notice, if we have not the wit to shake a cap and bells now and then, after the school of Erasmus and Sterne, or, more truly, to know when we are wearing it, and disarm ridicule by confessing folly. Ridicule is the needful discipline. He was no fool who said "all things are laughter." At any rate laughter is the great corrective for solemnities which have gone stale. We have heard it said that no one believes, till he can afford to laugh at, his own religion. True or not, the saying is to the purpose as pointing out the purgatorial office of ridicule. Nothing can save a man from being sometimes ridiculous, and ridicule is always right, always strikes home, always reveals something in the bone as well as in the skin. Noah drunk, David dancing, Vulcan limping, Mars in the net, are allegories to teach that Momus has his right over every mortal and immortal head. Now it is one, now another: none can read the *Book of Snobs* without wincing; just so if a *Book of Philistines* were written, there is not a

pedant living whose withers would be unwrung. The Philistine has at all events the advantage of being *au courant* with the common intellect of his time; the pedant knows a thing or two about his own province, but may possess no knowledge beyond. He must show his Hebraism by borrowing of his neighbour the jewels he needs, must learn of the Philistines themselves, or he will end in being as dull as they. At a certain time of life, or at a certain stage of success, most men are liable to find their faiths become formulas; they begin to lead the unexamined life which is not fit to live, and which leads to the heavy stupidity against which they have been protesting all their life. Craftsmen must be always sharpening their tools, and learning to use new tools; if not, the journeymen soon overtake them, and they sink to the journeyman level.

It is reported of St. Antony that having lived ninety years in the repute of being the holiest man—if not in Africa, at least in the district of Alexandria—it was revealed to him that there lived a holier than he in a distant part of the desert, Paul by name. Accordingly, in the true spirit of humility he set out to seek him, and at last found his cell in the recesses of a howling wilderness. We can imagine the details: the shut door, the holy dirt, the scant diet, the obstinate contest of humility and courtesy. Long the two old gentlemen (Paul's age was 113) contended in a kind of beggar-my-neighbour game of piety; the tame raven brought an extra roll for breakfast to prevent the starvation of both, for each would have starved sooner than eat before the other; at last Antony had the satisfaction of despatching his friend to heaven, burying his body with the help of two lions, and returning to his convent to find himself without a rival. Now it seems to me that Paul is not a person to imitate. He was able to preserve his reputation by living only within the view of a certain set; and his holiness was never tested as it would have been had he come off his own ground and consorted with the world as Antony did. He had absolutely no opportunity for sinning. If he had watered his cucumbers without feeling greedy, and said his prayers without feeling weary, he had done, when bedtime came, as much of his road to heaven as could be done in a day's journey. Whereas Antony, dragged from his cool cell and his blessed contemplation, his palm-trees and his solemn river, to the noise, and dirt, and ophthalmia of Alexandria, to wrangle with George and Arius, and hear again the old, old story of Athanasius' grievances—Antony's sanctity was not afraid of the test of provinciality. The true craftsmen of piety, as of other fine issues, are those who want no artificial protection of a clique to praise them, or a hermitage to hide them, or rules and formulas to justify them. The school of Shammai said "Bind," and the school of Hillel said "Loose;" but the true sons of Israel need neither doctrine; for they have the sense or tact of godliness, better than ordinances of binding or loosing. It gives a lustre to the piety of Augustine, George Herbert, and St. Charles Borromeo, that they lived in the world, or could go down into the crowd like Elijah from his mount. Daniel at his pulse was no nobler than

Daniel prince of the kingdom. It is not solitude alone, or society alone, that we need wrangle about; nor is it the society or solitude of bodies, but of ideas, that is in question. Cowper, amid the parochialities of Olney, "so ignorant, and by such ignoramuses surrounded," was less provincial than Baudelaire in Paris, because the ideas in which one lived are those of the poet's world, while those which formed the life-disease of the other were of his own circumstances, or time, or life. The *préjugés du clocher* can exist even in Paris. Baudelaire, with his musk and ambergris, his soft furs, his exquisiteness of music and rhythm, his love of what is uncommon, unexpected, morbid, even monstrous; with his half-human cats, his half-divine negresses, his half-Elysian haschisch; whose senses seem almost to interpenetrate so that colours are as a perfume to him, and sounds affect him as touch; whose pleasures seem to begin at that part of the spectrum of feeling where those of other men end; who seems not to belong to earth, but to live in a limbo between hell and heaven, too original and unique in his isolation to be a type, is nevertheless an ideal, the ideal of the perfect artist for whom Art is all, and all in itself; but a misleading ideal, because he has a false air of having tried all life and emotion and found it worthless. He held (if his cynicism held anything) that there was a quintessence of life—or dust—which might possibly be worth preserving if stored in the costliest vessels, ready to be spilt if ever it seemed precious; but to satisfy his sense of irony this quintessence had to be sought in dunghills and heaps of carrion. No illusion was to be admitted; the depths of the horrible must be sounded to find beauty, the deserts of spleen must be traversed to gather the rare spices of a true *ennui*. *Le beau c'est l'horrible—l'horrible c'est le beau*, he does not scruple to say. Those who praise his sentiment as well as his style are obliged to get astride of the "Art for Art" theory—a dangerous Pegasus—and declaim against "morality" as an enemy to Art. "Art for Art," like other maxims, is not of private interpretation, and has to be referred to the example of the great masters of sentiment and style; not only to the artists of to-day, who may turn out hereafter to be no more than skilled labourers; nor to sentimentalists and critics, who may be skilled labourers too, and yet never reach the level of Art. If the highest art of all the ages is unmoral, as we are told, "Art with poisonous honey stol'n from France" may be immoral, which is quite another thing; and the puritanical talk against "Moral Art," which is so common nowadays, may be as far wrong in its way as the moral and religious pictures and poetry of a hundred years ago. Here, as elsewhere, the common conscience of the world, for whose delight, if not for the glory of God, beautiful things are made, has a right to speak, and the purgatorial fire of Philistia will probably burn up Baudelaire and spare Cowper.

If this is an unfair comparison, put by the side of Baudelaire one of those artists who have lived a full life of pain and pleasure, glorifying both by human sympathy. There are scenes and ideas in *Les Misérables* which

touch on that paradox which I have quoted ; but the difference is this, that the one man, like the greatest painters, when dealing with horror seeks for beauty in it, the other seeks horror underlying beauty. The one loves a charnel-house for the sake of the lives of men his own kindred ; to the other his fellow-creatures seem the actors in a dance of death, and he grins as he strips all disguises off, and hears the teeth chatter and the ribs rattle under the thin covering of blood and vital tissue.

To return to our Philistines of the second sort,—those who are not merely obstructive from stupidity, but who apply the discipline of ridicule. They are irreverent ; they laugh and trample on ideas, are intolerant, and sometimes brutal. But they are not less medicinal. The opinion which is "*regina del mondo*" is not made up only of the stupid traditions of the stupid, stupid by natural aptitude and by inheritance, *ὄροι ἔξ ὄρων γινόμενοι* through many asinine generations ; it represents also much which it is salutary to hold provisionally, and something which is both salutary and true, and is often held more soundly and sensibly by men of the world than by artists, philosophers, or poets. Let them cry "Philistine" as they will, the man of large experience can allow the name ; for if wrong sometimes, he is oftener right than they.

I cannot take a better instance than Lord Macaulay, and the more so because he is a favourite instance of Philistinism. There he sits, in the frontispiece to Mr. Trevelyan's book, big, strong, hard-featured, certain of himself, without weaknesses, without *nuances*, without shame or blame, the very figure of triumphant commonplace. He had no sense of that which did not meet his gaze point blank. Direct denunciation, direct panegyric, dogmatical hypotheses, and domineering conclusions ; these are what he gives us. We do not expect from him balanced doubts and elegant hesitancy. But this does not necessarily make him a bad historian or an unsafe guide. On the contrary, he held a whole public opinion in himself. He was able to weigh in the balance a greater mass of facts than any one who had ever set himself to walk over the field of human knowledge. If we admit that he had but one supreme faculty, that of memory, others have approached him in this, and yet have made no mark in letters or affairs. Macaulay was not merely six cubits high, with a helmet of brass and a spear-staff like a weaver's beam, but had strength and skill to drive the iron home. No shield resists him. Through triple bull's hide—*tot ferri terga, tot aeris*—crashes the terrible weapon, and he grasps the reeking spoils. In the havoc of the battle he sometimes dealt a false blow and slew Lausus as well as Mezentius. But better that nine innocent men should be hanged than one rogue escape the gallows. We may be thankful for Macaulay ; and now that Croker and Montgomery have been sufficiently vindicated, we may leave the bodies of his slain to the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. In his Philistinism, such as it was, there was nothing stupid. He commanded a view of history and literature from an unattained height, and set things down as their proportions appeared to him thence. Hence he is

absolutely, in most instances, above criticism; his critics cannot refute his conclusions, because they do not know his premisses. He is, in short, too all-embracing and all-quelling to be ticketed by any such easy epithet as "Philistine." It is as if one were to call Oliver Cromwell a fanatic, or Julius Caesar a usurper, and think he had done with them. He is a Briareus, not a Goliath; and would kill you a score or two of his reviewers before breakfast. It is ill catching a whale with a landing-net. I claim this position for him, not in virtue of any special characteristic, but because of his great range of power and knowledge. He is one of those in whom no crudity of opinion or crassness of sense entitles writers of finer fibre to despise them as Philistines. In the "Philistine of Genius" genius supersedes Philistine. Our reverence receives a shock when Luther, Cromwell, and Bunyan are classed as it were with other Nonconformists. How well Mr. Kinglake, in *Eothen*, hints at the heavy Philistinism of the Duke of Wellington, and how well does he turn aside from respect to the great moral character which can bear along in its course much that would stick and stink in a shallower channel! "Great," said the Greek poet, "is the stream of the Assyrian river; but on its wave it carries much offscouring of the land and plenty of garbage." If you want a robust and illiberal judgment on any given subject, you have only to turn over the pages of Boswell's *Johnson*. Yet we are right in respecting Dr. Johnson, and in listening to everything that he said, whether good or bad. There are some souls that go straight to Paradise; and some Philistines who do not need the purgatory ordained alike for Philistines and their detractors.

A great deal has been heard of Herr Wagner during the last year, and shiploads of epithets have been imported from Germany for those who do not bow down and worship him. The Philistine has had his say about Wagner in *The Times* and elsewhere for thirty years past; but when the Bayreuth festival was set going he revived his right to question and laugh. In the Nibelung operas all traditions have been upset. The orchestra is invisible; the actors sing no airs; the audience sit in darkness; the stage is at one moment wrapped in flame, at another choked with steam from real steam-engines, at another flooded in water, in which it was reported that the chorus were to sing floating, supported by corks. One gentleman sang his part in a bonfire; another in a whale's belly, through a speaking-trumpet. The enterprise was and deserved to be a triumphant success, and Philistia is silenced. Since then Herr Wagner has been over here and secured his triumph. He has conquered Germany and annexed England; and none can grudge him the fruits of thirty years' hard fighting for his ideal. Yet there are elements in Wagnerism which can hardly be permanent, however great may be that which is to survive contemporary ridicule. We all know the programme (says the Philistine), the three T's—Tonkunst, Tanzkunst, Tichtkunst—what a confession of provincialism! a nation that cannot distinguish between surds and sonants—the Poet-musician-coryphæus Chimæra:

moderate poetry, for there at least the amateur critic may speak with less diffidence; exciting but disturbing music; and German dancing; to galvanise and glorify the forgotten, and perhaps well forgotten, heroes of the Nibelungen Lied. A national epic out of the dark ages is a very fine thing in its way; but it does not go very far in the nineteenth century; and why should it? It is natural enough that this should come in, in Germany, with other forms of Germanism. The Germans are a learned as well as a patriotic nation, and they know all about Varus and the Cherusci, and that Hermann was a German, and that Charles the Great was not a Frenchman; and, with archaeology a little at fault, they have "restored" the German empire, and got their German Rhine, and their "*petit vin blanc*" all to themselves. Half the army have won the Iron Cross. Moltke is a Count and Bismark a Prince, and '48 is forgotten. The German nation, full of glory and gold, looks back on its origins, and conceives Siegfried and the Walhalla to be as worthy of song as Achilles and Olympus: and so, in its worthy middle-class fashion, it will be classical, and makes a tetralogy, and declares it is the greatest dramatic and German work the world has known.

The weak point of Wagnerism—if it has one—is probably this, that it is too aggressively and tyrannically German. It is as insolent as French glory or British constitutionalism. No one quarrels with Greek sculpture and Italian painting for being too Greek and Italian; nor with the German colour of the greatest music. But the greatest works are because they are, not because they would be. They are great because they are universal, and tell us truth without preaching a theory. Germany is rich enough in music to abstain from taunting other nations with their poverty; and music is the most bountiful and least local of arts, and needs not to shut up its treasures in galleries. It spreads like flame where it kindles, without diminution of the original spark. And again, Wagnerism sins from arrogance, in claiming all the future and neglecting the past. Before it can claim to be universal, it must shake off or burn out these two provincialisms of place and time, or the Philistines will be upon it, and with reason.

We may put aside the fact that some of the first musicians of Germany believe Wagnerism to be a passing mania—for this is more or less the case with every new movement, and Handel's judgment of Gluck has not been confirmed by posterity—and confess Wagner's music to be what is called a great fact in the history of music. His supporters claim for him not only to have the profoundest knowledge of harmony and instrumentation, and to possess a native vein of melody of a very high order, and a great dramatic power; but they also assert that his dramas differ in kind from all that have gone before. They announce that melody, as it was understood by Mozart and Beethoven, has had its day; that music is valuable as an exponent of passion, and must carry the mind and heart with it, no longer content the ears and that ganglionic function which we term the soul. They speak of opera and symphony as having led the way to

this new revelation of drama, and say that music has only now found its true province, and that consequently all lovers of the art must look to the future, not to the past, for contentment. There is something of the fervour and intolerance of a religion in this. We admire the band of Puritans grasping the sword and the Bible of the *Zukunftsmusik*, resting on new authority and rebelling against old, as Puritans have always done, and we feel that Puritans generally have the future with them, and are on the side of hope, as opposed to that very moderate result which calls itself attainment, and is represented by the orthodox and their professors. But the dogmas of Puritans have always to run through the strainer of public opinion; and here comes in the inestimable privilege of Philistia, to keep the believers within limits, to supply the discipline of ridicule, and to clip and prune the superfluities which accompany all great growths; to weight true genius with the ballast of common sense: a humble office, but a needful. One important business of Philistia is to clear away the useless and impertinent imitators, and bring the original teacher (Maker, as Mr. Carlyle would say) into his proper place. Every maker is travestied, but is also helped by his apes, who bring some discredit on what he teaches, but at the same time perform the useful office of representing his ideas more or less distorted. The alloy helps the workman; it is necessary that truth should be recommended to the world by humbug. When Dr. Newman was a lecturer at Oriel, it is reported that his followers imitated unessential peculiarities (as Horace's imitators drank cummin to make themselves pale), and wore low shoes and white stockings. There is no sanctity attached to shoes and stockings short of going entirely discalced; it did them neither good nor harm; but it attracted attention. The Philistine laughed at them; but peculiarity gained notoriety, and now they can do without the shoes and stockings, and set the pattern of a uniform of their own. The Philistines have pruned off the shoes and stockings—well if they had been able to prune off modern extravagances not to be traced to 1833—and whatever was permanent in the Oxford Movement is all the stronger for having gone through the purgatory of ridicule. Wagnerism, too, is on its trial; but it has gone through the stage of self-assertion, and need not now insist that every detail is inspired. Like the Puritanism of the seventeenth century, it has its weaknesses; and it will have a fall, perhaps even a Restoration, if it presses its victories too hard, tries to stamp out what is classical, and prefers every professor of noise to the peaceful and humble lovers of cantabile and sonata-form. All honour to Puritans; but honour also to Philistines, who bring them into contact with possibilities, and teach them to be in harmony with their age.

It is not, however, enough to be in harmony with the age; the age is but one of the ages, and every age has its fashion. Fashion is always infallible in its day; but setting aside art and letters, we have only to think of the Turf and the Hurlingham of to-day, then the society which is drawn in

Vanity Fair and the *Newcomes*, till we come to Beau Brummel and the Pavilion, and the stifling dulness of *Tom and Jerry*, and a little farther back in the shade of time *Evelina* and Ranelagh, to see that all that glitters is not the gold of Helen's necklace. How difficult it is now to believe, in spite of obstinate archaeological sentiment, that Greuze and Watteau were once the perfection of *bon goût*; that Lely's houris were as fashionable as the sweet beauties of Sir Joshua and Gainsborough; that Dinglinger's hideous ornaments of monstrous pearls, the Duke of Buckingham's white cut velvet with 30,000*l.*-worth of jewels sewn upon it, Prince Hal's eyelet-holes, were once the finest things that the shifting glass of fashion could show! Or, to pass out of our own times altogether into other regions of *Vanitas Vanitatum*, how impossible it is to judge the taste of societies in which no exception could be made to the graceful indecencies of Appuleius or the Anthology, or when *Lais* and *Phryne* were openly admired by all men and secretly envied by many women! All these, and thousands more, hit the taste of their own day, and would be justly described by more or less coarse epithets in another. There is no trust to be placed in the verdict of any age; the Philistine is perhaps unborn who shall laugh down what we now admire. There is a grotesque passage in Montaigne's *Essays* in which, as is his fashion, he ridicules the practices which have been "the thing" in one age and country or another. Much is forgotten at once, much is sifted by Philistia only to be bolted again in a future time, till that which is permanent and human remains to be the delight of the world. There would be nothing to regret if we could be sure that every dog would have its day; but useful, blundering Philistia, knowing more of common sense than beauty, beats down good with bad, and the more delicate growths are often lost. There is no help for it, and we can hardly wish it otherwise; for, after all, the best mostly survives, and the bills thrown out by the *Parliamentum indoctorum* are taken up outside and brought in at their right time and in a better form for the use of the world.

One word more about the critics, those amateurs who, if we believe the craftsmen, are the worst of Philistines, "defaming and defacing" the living as well as the dead lions. Julius Cæsar asked Catullus to dinner; Oliver Cromwell spoke of detractors "as if a mouse should nibble at my heel." Sir Walter Scott's introduction to the *Lady of the Lake* is the perfect model of a great writer's courtesy; but few are wise enough, as he was, to "let parody, burlesque, and squibs find their own level," still fewer to take up Byron's insult about "Sir Walter's reign" and turn it into a gracious tribute to his rival's greatness. Great artists, as far as I can judge, are more generous in praising than others, but also more savage in retaliating. Pope on Atticus, Johnson on Chesterfield, Bentley on Boyle, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, are terrible instances of literary vengeance. There is the temptation of power, and the splendid success which attends its exertion; and probably the great ones are far more patient than the little ones suppose. It is right that great importunesses

should be chastised; yet the crowd of amateurs and critics who form and express opinions are each of them a little bit of the public by whose verdict authors stand or fall, and if they may not blame they have no right to praise. "Boys!" said Dr. Keate, "I'll flog you if you cheer; because if I let you cheer me I must let you hiss me." Let the critics hiss as geese or serpents, they will bray loud enough when the fit takes them! The poets, it is true, do not depend upon the public for the "thoughts which make rich the blood of the world;" but they write for readers, and readers, if they have a right to read at all, have a right to think.

Besides, it is only the living authors who may not be touched. We all have our crack at Goethe and Virgil, we criticise without sparing the shortcomings of Pope and the extravagances of Shakspeare. Yet, if living poets are sacrosanct, what can be more monstrous than that an anonymous writer in the *Cornhill* should venture to have an opinion about Iago? Why are not the poets in arms against the intruder? Any one may say what he likes about Shakspeare; partly, perhaps chiefly, because Shakspeare is dead and has no relatives living to defend him; partly, to be sure, because an educated man has a right to an opinion about the writers by whom his soul has been fed, and may express it without impertinence if it is not absurd in itself, as likely enough it is not. This rule of "*de vivis nil nisi bonum*" is not preserved in the case of other public men. We speak and write on platforms and in newspapers as blantly as we like about statesmen who know their business better than we do; and thereby those statesmen get much deserved praise and blame, and no doubt are the better for both. Let the critics have no more than their due, which is to be listened to with moderate attention and good temper; for they may say true, and if they talk nonsense it will fall on their own heads.

"*Securus judicat orbis terrarum*" is a good saying if it is understood in its length and breadth; for there is a false "security" which belongs to a clique or a person, the security of public opinion which belongs to orthodoxy or conceit. This, which is merely ridiculous in an individual, becomes mischievous in a clique; because it encourages bad work and hides good work by cherishing a sectarian spirit. The "dissidence of dissent" exists in other regions than that of religion. Purists and puritans of all kinds are hardened by it into pedants or fanatics; what was provincial easily becomes parochial; and when once they have reached this stage, they are fit to join the ranks of the very Philistines against whom they have spent their lives in protesting. When Luther has decided to abolish the Epistle of James and give an Elector two wives, he is as much out of court as the Pope himself, who has at least a good following of *orbis terrarum* at his back. There is in all human strifes, on one hand, a sense of experience, of proportion, of the discipline of ridicule, which gives that side a right to be considered as a belligerent, even though its principles and practice may be wrong and those of the

other side right. There were clumsy reformers and learned priests, as there were heavy-handed monks and cunning authors of *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*. So it always is; each side misjudges the other and uses the epithet "Philistine," or some equivalent name, not without reason. The point where the balance tips is that at which it becomes clear, often after the first group of actors are gone by, which side is to win. Till then, attack and defence use all their weapons; theory batters on practice, practice insults and ridicules theory. The attack may be to press some passing cause, and may embody nothing permanent; if so, it will fail, and practice and possession will keep their laugh. Or, on the other hand, it may be the dawning of a light of the ages; and then the laugh will be turned, and *orbis terrarum*, with all its worldly wisdom, will learn a lesson, the lesson perhaps of Paganism and the Catholic Church. It is the power of distinguishing a rising cause from a passing fancy or discontent that has marked great leaders of thought and action; they know on which side the Philistines are. They may sojourn in Gath and dissemble, and incur reproach as traitors or cowards from the more ardent men whose work they use; but they understand better than the Philistines themselves the strength of stupidity both to hinder and to help, and will never allow themselves to become stupid from over-cleverness.

My conclusion, then, is that Philistia is a neighbour land where live friends as well as enemies of the chosen people. The Hebrews are often passing to and fro, and sometimes they miss their orientation and shake off the dust of their feet when their faces are turned away from Jerusalem. The wise Hebrew builds his wall with the sword in his left hand. He spoils the Philistines, as he has always spoiled the nations, without despising them—for Hiram is skilful to work, and the Chaldeans know the stars; learning of their wisdom to strengthen his own perceptions and make them solid and trustworthy; tolerant of all unlikenesses, and regarding the proportions of like things. But if he despises Philistia and dwells too much in his own little city, the strangest fate will come upon him. The strictest Pharisee will be caught and bound and made to grind in the prison-house blinded, not knowing that he is doing the work of his enemies and becoming more and more like them. The Pharisee turned Philistine is a spectacle familiar to the philosopher who sits at leisure in his swing-basket, and contemplates the follies of men. Let him not swing there too long; or Aristophanes, standing on the firm earth, will shake him down with laughter, and convince him by bruises that his basket was not the world, and perhaps no part of it.

Delphi.

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I.

WE had (speaking figuratively) hung up our bridles in the temple of Athene Chalinitis at Corinth before taking boat across the eastern half of the gulf. After a dreamy passage through its blue waters, we found ourselves landed in the full heat of noon at Itea, the Scala, i.e. stair, or landing place of Salona, which occupies the site of Amphissa, the chief town of the Ozolian Locrians. No horses are to be met with at Itea; and the camels stalking beneath their burdens along the quay were clearly not designed by Nature for the climbing of mountain passes. Soon our humble procession of mules was jangling across the dusty plain; and our pilgrimage to Delphi—the dream of many years—had begun in earnest.

Fields of corn and clumps of olive-trees and vineyards, with the berries trailing along the ground, cover the Crissean plain—and all are overspread by a grey coat of dust. Unlike the mules of the Phæacian princess, our beasts show no disposition to run with speed and move well onward with their legs, but they too shall in time gain praise as strong-hoofed and as the most sure-footed of mountaineers. Meanwhile their guardians, stepping briskly along in gaiters and petticoats of many folds, are urging them on with long-drawn cries, melancholy and monotonous. These cries, varied now and then by amœbean strains of unmitigated discord, are to be the accompaniment of our journeyings for many days, till at last we bid farewell to our honest muleteers as they sit at their parting feast before the steaming cookshop of St. Demetrius in Thebes fair. To-day we are only on the eve of our toils through the Parnassus-country. Not a breath of air is stirring in the sultry noontide. Above, the sun is blazing out of a cloudless blue, and the birds are asleep, in silent concert with the dozing boy aloft on his scaffold of straw in the field.

The plain through which we are riding, in ancient times as now, furnished an easy access to the Delphic pass; and the sea-port of Cirrha, whose remains are sought a little to the east of our landing-place, had grown wealthy in consequence. With wealth came insolence and outrages, and in the course of time vengeance overtook the citizens of the flourishing sea-port; a Sacred War waged in the interests of the temple and its pious visitors destroyed Cirrha and consecrated the whole of the plain to

the Delphic Apollo. The victors employed the spoils in founding the Pythian games, which were at first no doubt celebrated on the plain itself. The chariot of Clisthenes of Sicyon, whose ships had cut off the supplies of the Cirrheans in the Sacred War, gained him the laurel-wreath in the second of these contests, which three centuries later the great Athenian orator could still call the common agôn of the Greeks. But there was another purpose of a more useful character, for which the whole of the plain 'tween Mount Cirphis and the sea was left untilld. Whoever approached the oracle had first to offer sacrifice under the superintendence of its priests. The Cretan mariners whom Apollo had chosen for the founders of his temple had faltered at the outset when bidden to build a temple on the rocky height. "How," they had asked of the god, "shall we be able to live in such a spot?" "Foolish men and faint-hearted," the god replied, "who think but of toil and trouble. I will give you counsel easier to follow. Each of you take his knife in his hand and be ever ready to sacrifice sheep; these shall be brought to me in endless numbers by the people; guard ye the temple and receive its visitors." The lesson of faith was soon learnt, and for long centuries the priests could say, as Ion said to Creusa, "The altars have nourished me, and the ceaseless flow of visitors." The plain thus became a pasture-ground for the destined victims of the Delphic sacrifices, and remained untilld and unpeopled. But the sea-port was, after all, a necessity for the temple itself, and in course of time it crept into a furtive life again. When in after days King Philip of Macedon had established the head-quarters of his intrigues at Delphi, his good friends the Locrians of Amphissa took possession of Cirrha and began building there. But a well-organised fit of religious enthusiasm swept away the encroachments; and, nominally to avenge this petty trespass, another Sacred War was kindled which laid Amphissa level with the ground, and which in its results—for such are sometimes the results of little wars in which great powers have a hand—extinguished the liberties of Hellas.

From this fatal plain over which Apollo was long lord from the hillside to the sea, a gradual stony ascent conducts us to the village of Chryso, at the entrance of the Delphic gorge. Here we pause, as the pilgrims may have paused of old, to drink from one of the welcome springs of the village, and to mend the scanty furniture of our mules. It is the first of the villages of Parnassus where fancy, for it is nothing more, supposes the Greek population to survive in unmixed purity of race. Nowhere, at all events, are taller and lithier mountaineers to be found than among the Parnassian villagers; for the beauty of their daughters it is better not to seek too hopefully. During our brief halt at Chryso we are the centre of an undisguised but unobtrusive curiosity; a patriarch on his doorstep conducts the conversation with our eloquent travelling servant, and from the lattice above we are silently surveyed by heads half-hidden in the rosemary growing out of the *οἶçi* and *val* of a ballot-box.

Chryso stands on the site—it can hardly be doubted—of the ancient Crissa, the Phocian city to which Delphi originally belonged as a mere local sanctuary. The Homeric hymn to Apollo, written about the eighth century, does not regard Delphi as a separate place from Crissa. "Come," it says, "to Crissa, under sunny Parnassus—a height turned to the west; over it hangs a rock; beneath runs a hollow precipitous ravine." Crissa was the natural acropolis of the plain of which Cirrha was the port, and commanded the rocky valley, where its citizens established sanctuaries of religious worship—doubtless of other deities in the first instance, and then of Apollo. When the Dorian advance from Thessaly to the rear of Parnassus opened the connection between Delphi and Tempe, when the sacred road was built from Delphi to Mount Olympus, and when the Dorians gave the impulse to the foundation of the great League which took Delphi under its special protection, the local sanctuary became a national one, Hellenic instead of Crissean. The question thus at once arose whether the Crisseans, or the Phocians, of whom they formed part, could maintain their claim to administer the revenues and manage the affairs of the Delphic temple, or whether the latter, self-governed and independent, should be emancipated from local control. As against Crissa, the question was settled early in the sixth century by the Sacred War already mentioned, in which the sea-port of Cirrha was destroyed, and Crissa itself (for its precise fate is unknown) was at all events permanently reduced to insignificance. Athens—with Sicyon—had on this occasion come forward as the champion of national as against local pretensions; the whole war had been Solon's work. For Athens had been recently consecrated as a city to Apollo, who had hitherto only been the god of the Eupatrid families; and the Sacred War seemed a fit enterprise for a community once more at peace with itself, and looking forward to a legislative settlement of its institutions. The later Delphic policy of Athens is not wholly consistent with the earlier, for, as regards the Phocians, it suited the Athenians in later times to espouse their claims to the management of the temple, which they asserted by force in the days of Philip. The brief epoch of Phocian ascendancy ended in the ruin and desolation of Phocis itself.

Thus Crissa at an early period lost its share in the glories of Delphi—and became merely the entrance or portal to the road on which it once naturally exercised sovereign control. Such fragments of marble and other ancient remains as are still observable at Chryso may have afterwards been brought from Delphi in the days of its downfall, and need not detain us on our journey. That journey, it can hardly be doubted, takes us along the very road by which the *theoria* or sacred processions usually approached the temple—since it is difficult to suppose that, instead of passing along the middle of the western ridge of the valley of the Plistus, they followed the bottom of that valley itself, whence the sacred edifices of Delphi would have appeared at a giddy height above the pilgrims' heads.

Even without its associations the two-hours' ride from Chryso to Castri, from Crissa, i.e. to Delphi, may be called unsurpassed in the impressiveness of its scenery. Next to its lacking all associations, the safest test to apply to the effect of natural scenery is perhaps to imagine the wrong ones—like the faithful Murray, for instance, who thinks himself safe in describing "all around" as "stern, a fit approach to a shrine of gloomy superstition." This is, perhaps, the very last way of describing the character of the Delphic sanctuary on which one would have naturally fallen; but the description of the pass, before the neighbourhood of Delphi is reached, seems accurate enough. Nature is indeed stern and gloomy as viewed from the road between Parnassus and Cirphis in the valley of the Plistus, and the precipitous sides of the mountain, along which lie scattered in wild chaos the stones and rocks torn off by the earthquakes in their wild sport, descend with tremendous severity to the bed of the little stream below. But the awe which nature inspires in her self-inflicted desolation, the terror which she would inspire if the tempest were up on the mountain side and the rocks were quaking on their bases, and the streams in the valley were swollen to a destructive torrent, are feelings not in harmony with the worship in the temple beyond, sacred to the god who had cast them out. The book is open before us in which to read the meaning of the name of the Pythian Apollo. For what is the slaying of the dragon Python from which the god derives his best-beloved name, but the victory of light over darkness, the staying of the powers of destruction by the divine beneficence, the arresting of the horrors of inundation and decay in the valley of the shadow of death beneath? The significance of the myth easily extending itself from the material to the moral world, it became the symbolic basis of most of the festive solemnities of the Delphic temple, and the triumphal cry which first arose when the monster lay smitten by the shaft of Apollo became the vocal device of victory and thanksgiving throughout the Hellenic world. *Ἦ ἡ παῖνον*, no longer shall the earth-born monster desolate the fields, and destroy men and beasts, and drink the rivulets, and scare the nymphs, and encircle the mountains, in his terrible embraces; a helper and a healer is come, and the power of the sun-god has broken nature's winter.

In the days when the Delphic temple was honoured as the common sanctuary of the Hellenic world, and even for some time after its most glorious period had passed, neither temple nor city seems to have required the ordinary protection of walls. Delphi was certainly not a fortified city as late as the middle of the fourth century B.C., when it was forcibly seized by the Phocian general, Philomelus; and when, rather less than a century afterwards, it was attacked by the Gauls, it is expressly stated to have had no other than its natural defences. This was the occasion when the god, being asked how he would defend his temple, replied by the mouth of the Pythia, "I will provide for that—I and the White Maidens." The White Maidens whose onset confounded the

Celtic host were the snowdrifts on the heights of Parnassus. We saw one of them next day, hiding on the side of one of the peaks of the mountain away from the rays of Apollo, the lover of her sister Chione. On the north side Delphi needs no walls, for here rise the twin natural parapets of Nauplia and Hyampeia; on the south the mountain side descends—the inlets are only to the east and the west. But that to the east is described already by Pausanias as steep and difficult; it is that which leads up from the Schiste—or Divided Way—where the three roads from Daulis, Amhysus, and Delphi meet. Doubtless this route, difficult as it was, was much used by the pilgrims from Thebes and Athens; it formed part of the Pythian road proper, which the Athenians gloried in having themselves opened, and which their royal hero Theseus was said to have freed from robbers. A famous legend testifies to its narrowness. It was before the entrance to the Schiste that the chariot of the ill-fated Œdipus met that of Laius in the narrow path. We saw the spot on our journey from Delphi, and listened to the narrative of a horrible event which has attached to the scene a new memory of blood. Hard by there rises a monument in honour of Megas, once a notorious brigand, and afterwards brigand-catcher in the service of King Otho's government. He had caught in the trap of the cross-roads one of the brigand chiefs, whose head he had promised to bring home to Athens to the good Queen Amalia, and the dying robber begged his captor, an old comrade, for one parting embrace. Megas could not refuse it, and his captive stabbed him dead in his embrace. The eastern road, then, required but little defence; and it was on the west only that in the later days of the temple the Delphians built their wall, the traces of which are among the first Delphic remains meeting the traveller's eye on the western road. Before he reaches these, however, he has already noticed sepulchral excavations in the rocks, where the citizens buried their dead—where, perhaps, weary pilgrims may at times have been laid to sleep in the vicinity of the restful sanctuary.

Soon we reach the houses of the village of Castri, which occupies the site of Delphi itself. We are in a great natural amphitheatre of terraces, descending towards the bed of the river Plistus beneath, and ascending to the base of the rocky wall behind. The first part of the circle of rocky mountains above Delphi consists of the Phædriades, whose crags shut out the view of plain and sea, except through the inlet of the gorge, and as seen from the other end of the Delphic enclosure, receive the first rays of the morning sun. Immediately beneath these lay the *stadium* or race-course—constructed in the later days when the art of architect and engineer did not shrink from so difficult a task—the theatre, the *lesche*, and lowest the temple of Apollo itself, built on a terrace supported by an ancient Pelasgic wall. It was this wall which was in part brought to light, with the inscriptions covering it, by Ottfried Müller and Ernst Curtius, when they paid a visit to Delphi in the year 1840. It was a fatal visit for the elder, and at that

time most famous, of the pair, for exposure to the sun while copying the Delphic inscriptions, followed by a journey through the Copaic marshes and their evil exhalations, threw him on a sick bed from which he never rose. French scholars, deputed by that French school of resident archaeologists at Athens, which has done such noble service to the exploration of Greek antiquity, followed in the track of these eminent predecessors; and it seems probable that their labours, and those of MM. Foucart and Wescher, will at no distant date be resumed by the Athenian Society of Archaeology, of whom we found an eager and courteous representative on the spot. The French discoverers found some drums and capitals of Corinthian columns, which seem to belong to the ancient temple—to that which was begun by the Alcæonidæ towards the end of the sixth century, and of which a Corinthian, Spintharus, was the first architect. They found subterraneous chambers—probably those in which the treasures of the temple were concealed in the Homeric days, and whence the Phocians would have snatched them, had not the god, by the warning sounds of an earthquake, stayed their impious enterprise. And—following an indication given by Pausanias—they found the very place of the *adyton*, or holy of holies of the temple, whither the water of the fountain Cassotis, descending from the Phædriades and passing underground, carried its inspiring stream. The water of Cassotis for a time ceased to flow; and underneath its calcareous deposits were found inscriptions of the second century B.C. Where the line of the stream crosses the enclosure of the temple must have been the spot on which the Pythia set up her tripod, and whence she delivered the oracles of the god from under his golden statue.

Leaving the ruins of the temple of Apollo and the houses of the village which cover so large an unexcavated part of them behind us on the left, we pass the rocky fissure which separates the two beetling rocks of Nauplia and Hyampeia—whose twin points caused the ancients to call Parnassus, of which they are by no means the summits, the two-headed mountain. It is through this chasm that the Castalian fountain once poured its lustral waters into the basin beneath. Part of its course is still discernible in a cave into which we penetrated, but which in winter the melting snow renders inaccessible; but the rocks have been moved by the earthquakes, and one of the last of these—in 1870—crushed out of sight the basin itself. But in the rock by its side may still be seen the niches where votive offerings were doubtless placed for the nymphs, and in one of which the inhabitants to this day place their tributes to a Christian saint. A pool of clear water which we may fairly call Castalian is still bubbling from a perennial spring: and we drink a draught of the ice-cold element without whose purification no worshipper approached the temple, and the Pythia herself did not dare to utter her prophecies.

A little further, hard by the locality of the ancient gymnasium, and on the spot—or near it—where the temple of Athene Pronaia rose to

welcome the Athenian pilgrims arriving on the Schiste road, is the little monastery of the Panagia—the Blessed Virgin—served (as most monasteries now are in Greece) by a single priest. He makes us welcome to his little house and yard, where over pavements of ancient marbles one may step into his little church, barbarously gay in its solitude with the tawdry ornaments of modern Greek devotion. On the wooden balcony of the house we watch the shades of night gathering in the gorge, the whole length of which lies stretched out before us, and lie down to rest. Day passes into darkness and darkness into light without a change in the temperature, with scarce a stir in the deep tranquillity around, till at last “the lustrous car with yoked steeds, the sun is shining o’er the earth, and banishing before his fire the stars into the sacred night. The trackless summits of Parnassus now are lighted up and joyously receive for mortal men the chariot of day.”

II.

To the historical student Delphi is not indeed the navel of the earth, but the centre of much that is noblest and most elevating in one of the noblest and most elevating spheres of human history.

One of the influences which gave to Hellas and Hellenic culture during a long period much of the measure of unity which they possessed, not only had and was acknowledged to have its actual centre here, but was historically identified with the name of Delphi by the Greek world and that part of the outside world which came into contact with it. This influence was that of the Apolline religion and worship—a worship which, so far from seeking to oust or depreciate those of other deities, rather elevated and strengthened them by uniting itself with them, and tended to range them all in a system which reached its apex in the worship of Zeus Hypatus, the Highest God. Thus the temples of other divinities rose by the side of that of Apollo in the Delphic valley—there at the eastern entrance was worshipped Athene Pronoia or Pronaia (likewise worshipped on Apollo’s sacred isle of Delos); there burnt the sacred fire of Hestia, *omphalos* proper of the earth, where all who came to consult the oracle were first bound to offer sacrifice; there Dionysus, as Plutarch expressly tells us, was honoured as zealously as Apollo himself, and the grave from which he annually rose was guarded in the *adyton* by the side of the Pythian tripod. To his father Zeus, Apollo paid the highest reverence; the temple at Olympia was built under the sanction of Delphi; and in the degenerate days when religious belief had stiffened into calculating superstition, it was thought a safe plan—not to call it a pious dodge—to obtain an oracle from the Olympian Zeus and then have it confirmed (for contradicted it could not be) by the Pythian Apollo.

This Apolline worship itself was (speaking of the Hellenic world) singularly cosmopolitan. Crete shared it with Delphi; and it was

familiar to Attica and the whole of Ionia. When the Dorians established a seat of the Amphictyony at Delphi, a whole series of Apolline foundations arose along the road from Mount Olympus to the valley of the Plistus. For a long time at least the Dorians, even in Peloponnesus, preserved a peculiar attachment to Apollo; nor could a bitterer shame have been inflicted upon Sparta in after days by the victorious Thebans than her exclusion from the Pythian games. In these games we recognise a specially characteristic influence of the Apolline religion. Unlike those of the great Hellenic festivals, they included competitions in music as well as the gymnastic art. Indeed at first Apollo had disdained other but music contests near his sanctuary, and had our piety been more wakeful during our ride through Delphi, we might have remembered Tilphusa's protest in the Homeric hymn, while our thirsty mules were jostling one another for a share in the water descending from the Phædriades. "Thou art vexed by the sound of swift horses, and by mules quenching their thirst from my sacred springs." By these festivals, and the devotion to music which they expressed, Delphi became a school of Apolline art; and the flowing Ionic robes of the cither-player are those of the festive dress of the Delphic Apollo. The route of the processions which repaired to these games was an almost unbroken chain of Pythian temples and oracles; and Pindar sang of this marvellous extension of the worship of Apollo in the form of a legend of the wanderings of the god himself. But that power through which he most specially and effectively diffused his influence was exercised through his oracles themselves, and above all through those delivered in his temple at Delphi.

The Delphic oracle was of course only one among several institutions of the same kind in the Hellenic world; and it may therefore be well at once to inquire wherein for us consists its singular significance. There can be little doubt that the wisdom of the earliest Greek oracles—of which Dodona in Epirus was the most ancient and the chief—was originally a weather-wisdom, and that the earliest prophetesses consulted there were the birds of the air—the black doves who settled in the branches of the prophetic oak. The Dodona oracle was, in short, as it has been called,* a great meteorological observatory; but such an observatory, if it can be depended upon, is of primary importance for a population consisting entirely of husbandmen, and entirely dependent for its sustenance not only upon the harvest but upon the harvest of its own soil. Soon the discovery was made that not only the birds are sensitive to the warnings of the atmosphere, but human beings as well, among them more especially women. Asking advice on one subject leads to asking advice on another; and counsel was soon sought from the wisdom of Dodona on other matters besides those directly connected with the change of the seasons and the coming and going of the storms. But if

* See E. Doehler's admirable lecture *Die Orakel* (Berlin, 1872).

the heavens were watched and the fore-knowledge they disclosed of coming events was interpreted to eager questioners, so was the earth, whose succession of products likewise seemed to reveal the same innate prophetic gift. Thus the personified Earth came to be honoured as the most primitive of prophets, and from her it was supposed that her prophetic power was communicated by her mysterious outpourings—her exhalations and her springs. Many oracular localities thus acquired fame—among them, at an early date, the rocky Pytho, where natural instinct (goats were said to have discovered the Delphic oracle, and doubtless they were the earliest and will be the latest inhabitants of the gorge) revealed the prophetic spot. The Earth—the Night—Themis, the law-giver—Posidon, who shakes the earth with his trident—Athena Pronoia, the goddess of foresight—Hestia—all these were successively connected with the Delphic oracle before it was taken possession of by Apollo. He did not expel their worships when he established his own among them; he was but a prophet among prophets, but the most powerful among them all—the all-seeing one, whose beams shed light upon all things, and evoked from the responsive earth the inspiring exhalations.

But the full significance, the historic significance properly speaking, of the Apolline oracle at Delphi, only begins when it became the centre of a great political organisation, which, without being strictly national in its extent, yet partook of the character of a national institution. The agricultural tribes had now grown into political communities, their interests and needs had come to extend beyond questions of seed-time and harvest time, and the counsel they asked from their established centre referred to questions of social conduct and political life, to questions of war and peace, of legislation and constitution, of public institutions and party contests, of the foundation of settlements and colonies. No merely human instinct, fortified by merely human experience, seemed capable of satisfying such demands as these. Divination became inspiration; it assumed the forms of that fine frenzy which possesses the poet; it clothed itself in rhythmic language, and communicated itself through the lips of women wholly under the dominion of the god. It is in this period that the influence and authority of the Delphic oracle were indisputably at their height. Freed from the local control of a Phocian country town, it had become an independent power free to manage its own affairs. Noble families from whom the priestly officers were chosen stood at its head, with a council, and in later times an assembly, a small civic community, and a tributary rural population. Among the priestly officers a body of five *ἁγιοί*, or Holy Ones, seems to have formed a directory; they have been more or less aptly compared to a college of cardinals. The sanctity of the Delphic territory was guaranteed by the Amphictyony, and the Delphic state occupied a position in Greece something like that which the Papal States would have held in the reorganised Italy contemplated by Napoleon III. after Villafranca. But its strength lay in

the piety which it commanded throughout Hellas and wherever the Hellenic name was honoured. Cypselus of Corinth, Clisthenes of Sicyon, Solon of Athens—these are among the names connecting themselves with its greatest age; it was honoured by Phrygian princes and by the kings of Lydia, by the Etruscans and the Etruscan family on the royal throne at Rome (the Tarquini), and by the founders of the young Republic. Its civilising influence spread in a network of roads close to its temple through Greece; it pointed the way to the Greeks on their expeditions of foreign discovery and settlement; it welcomed, in the name of Hellas as it were, foreign princes who desired to enter into relations of intimacy with the Hellenic world. It stirred and directed the national activity by the impulse of its counsel and the fulness of its geographical knowledge, and was acknowledged as the consultative centre of the political world of Greece both at home and abroad. The legislation of Lycurgus at Sparta appealed to a Delphic sanction; indeed, Apollo himself is sometimes mentioned as its author. It was his behest which commended the laws of Zaleucus as the healing remedy for the dissensions of the Epizephyrian Locrians. Solon was called upon by Delphi to place himself at the helm of the Attic State; and the reforms of Clisthenes, which perfected the operations of the Solonian constitution, were consecrated by the same authority. Such was the power of Delphi in the days of its greatness—about the time when the conflagration of the temple befel, and when the piety of Greece, above all that of an exiled family of Athenian nobles, restored it with munificent splendour.

After this climax came the beginning of the period of decline. The primary cause of this decline is to be sought in the decay of that spirit of national unity of which Delphi was the representative. Sparta had become a Peloponnesian power; and as she had done nothing for Delphi in the First Sacred War, so though she still revered and at critical seasons followed the Delphic behests, her eyes were turned rather towards Olympia than to the northern sanctuary across the gulf. She had encouraged the establishment of other festive centres, all purely Dorian in origin and association. The growth of Athens was preparing the fatal dualism which was to rend Hellas asunder; but Athens was fermenting in revolution and tyranny, from which Delphi, holding fast to the old order, averted its eye. When the great trial of the Persian Wars came upon Greece, she would have fallen a trembling prey into the grasp of the conqueror, had not Athens, at the bidding of one statesman of transcendent genius and foresight, placed herself in the van—virtually alone in spirit. At this crisis Delphi hesitated and held back, and when the war had been waged and the victory won, proved unable to mould itself to the new times and the new greatness of Athens, Delphi's own truest defender of old as she had now shown herself the truest champion of Hellenic freedom. Though the courage of Delphi revived with the courage of the nation which Athens and her great statesman alone had kept from sinking, yet after the victory the priesthood not only

rejected the gifts of Themistocles, but refused to reconcile itself to the democracy whose sway he made a reality. Delphi would not recognise the fact that (to use the words of Grote) the real protectors of its treasures were the conquerors of Salamis and Platea, and contented itself with promulgating the story of the repulse of the Persians from the temple of Apollo by the interposition of the god himself.

Thus, after Delphi had proved untrue to its national task at the national crisis, because it had been unable to assume the true function of a directing power—which is to direct—it gradually passed into a false position towards the true heir of the future of Hellas. Refusing to go hand in hand with Athens, it became a mere factor on which the selfish conservatism of Sparta could more or less count—a conservatism which could prevent the progress of another power but not prepare its own. At the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Delphi summoned the Locrians to join the Spartan confederation—acting the part of a patriarch thundering in the name of a czar—and a good understanding with Athens was only restored in passing, in the days when the pious Nicias had patched up a peace with the baffled conservative power in Peloponnesus. The political authority of Delphi continued to sink, nor was its importance ever revived except in a way and in times fatal for Hellenic freedom. Epaminondas had employed its agency against Sparta with Napoleonic determination; Iason of Pheræ, who thought to inherit the supremacy of Thebes, had opened his brief career as hegemon by a display of his royal splendour at Delphi and a hecatomb of a thousand bulls. The Phocians attempted to carry back its history to the traditions of the Crissean days by forcibly seizing its management, but soon ended by melting down its treasures into pay for their mercenaries and ornaments for the mistresses of their chiefs. The golden gifts of Croesus, the necklaces of Helen and Eriphyle, had become the spoils of a sacrilegious local patriotism when the restorer of Delphi and the avenger of Apollo arrived in the person of the Macedonian Philip. He redeemed the honour of the God; but what place was there for a national temple and a national oracle in a dependent province? Delphi recovered much of its splendour, and preserved it through Macedonian and even through Roman times; but its temple had lost its national importance, and the chief significance of the sanctuary perhaps had come to lie in the facilities which it furnished for one of the most humanising institutions of Greek and Roman society—the institution of enfranchisement. To this a large number of the recently-discovered inscriptions refer. Its oracle had become a resort for private occasions only, and its authority in this direction was being gradually superseded by the activity of lower forms of divination—corresponding, like the most ancient of which we spoke, to physical rather than moral needs. The gods of the dead were taking the place of the gods of the living; and a superstitiously mystic pantheism sought its aid in the fancies of an enervated religious sense. A gentle sceptic like Cicero could surmise the fictitiousness of the

ancient Delphic oracles and weigh the evidence for them in the balance of diplomatic criticism; a speculative believer like Plutarch could sit with his friends in the precincts of the Apolline temple itself, and mingle with daring physiological conclusions credulous anecdotes which would rejoice a spiritualist of our own age of reason.

In conclusion, as it seems possible and even necessary to distinguish between several periods in the history of the Delphic oracle, might it not be likewise well, in applying a justified scepticism to its operations, to attempt a similar historical distinction? Of the first period—when the oracle was a mere *μαρτυρὸν χθόνιον*—giving the responses of the Earth to the questions addressed to her as to her own physical phenomena—we know little, and are relatively little concerned to know more. Our interest in the character of the oracle becomes deepest when it becomes an essentially moral interest, and when we inquire into the causes which sustained the moral, social, political, and religious control indisputably for a long time exercised by it over the Greek world. That interest is proportionately diminished when we recognise without difficulty that the moving power is becoming a moved one—not a mere puppet unless on quite exceptional occasions, but still a machine responsive to the touch of the instructed hand. Finally, it sinks into comparative indifference when the organism is seen to have survived its highest purposes, and while still filling an important place in the social and even in the religious life of the civilised world, fails to tempt us aside from a survey of the main currents by which the progress of that life is determined.

If, then, we had—which of course we have not—anything like a complete collection of the Delphic oracles, I doubt whether we should wish to see them arranged on the principle which appears to have been followed by the philosopher Chrysippus in his collection, that of gathering together all the oracular responses which had been visibly fulfilled. As to the mere question of the event, one may rest content with the simple observation of that worthy military man, Q. Cicero, that the oracle of Delphi would never have been so celebrated and honoured, had not all ages proved the truthfulness of its responses—and this, even if one agrees with the statement of the same honest critic (as to oracles in general), that at times things which have been predicted happen in a less degree (*minus eveniunt*). One likes these gentle ironies of the classic tongues). Indeed, at the risk of seeming to beg the difficulty, one may venture to say that it is a quite secondary question whether to an inquirer of after times it seems, or does not seem, as if the oracles had always proved true. The primary question is, whether they fulfilled themselves in the eyes of the generation to which they were given; whether they accomplished their purpose. And this makes it necessary to ask, what in point of fact was their scope and object? to what end were they shaped, what was their legitimate relation to the life of the nation?

"I have come," says Hermes in the prologue to the play which I have inevitably cited more than once (for the *Ion* of Euripides is a poetic handbook to the Delphic temple)—"I have come to this land of Delphi, where, taking his seat in the very navel of the earth, Phoebus utters his chants to mortals, ever soothsaying to them both that which is and that which shall be." Observe the phrase: soothsaying that which *is*,—distinct if you like in the poet's mind from prophesying that which shall be. Now, the plain truth is, that the basis of all true practical wisdom—and it was such that men pausing on the brink of action sought from the temple of Apollo—lies in insight into the present, of which foresight into the future is a mere derived corollary. Nor was it the future which Apollo was fain to reveal to mortal inquirers; on the contrary, this remained resting on the knees of the gods, its needs were only darkly hinted at. But as to the present, and the present as affecting the future, he spoke with a very different force; bidding men act with circumspection, with prudence, with piety; supplying them with that moral impulse, that encouragement, that counsel to act and not stand irresolute, which was the real help, so long as religious faith and religious hope were dominant in the Hellenic mind, which the Hellenes sought from the Delphic god. Or can it be supposed that the Greeks were—what their whole ethical system proves them not to have been—sheer fatalists—that when they went to consult Apollo as to the establishment of a code of laws, the foundation of a religious worship, the averting of a pestilence, the building of a temple, the settlement of a colony, they did so in the spirit of gambling imbecility which decides between two courses of action by the turn of a coin, whether it be pile or cross? It was counsel and the consecration of the will which the oracle could give and which were sought from it, not the substitution of a mere command based on a foreknowledge pliantly revealed to human irresolution—the irresolution of the man who does "not know why yet he lives to say the things to do," when "he has cause and will and strength to do't."

Now if we adhere to this point of view we shall without difficulty understand wherein lay that moral force of the Delphic oracle which it indisputably wielded in the days of its greatness. We shall likewise advance some way towards understanding what may at first sight appear paradoxical—that these oracles, which we are accustomed to regard as primarily the revelations of the future, were to outward seeming so obscure. In the first place it may be incidentally observed that much of this obscurity, as it seems to us, was not really such to the recipients. This is a point which has been copiously illustrated by Lobeck in his *Aglaophamus*. Unlike those profound critics who start with the in itself absurd notion that the object of the Pythia was not to enlighten but to mystify inquirers—as if men would have resorted to Delphi for centuries to hear curious riddles—he endeavours to *account for* the form in which the oracular responses were usually couched. He recalls the fact—which the history of literature so abundantly exemplifies—that alle-

gorical speech is more moving, more pleasing, more esteemed than direct; and this, not because it conceals the truth, but because it conveys the truth more impressively. He further shows that there was a poetic language, dealing largely in metaphor and paraphrase, which was certainly not used in the ordinary conversation of men, but which was partly derived from ancient and popular speech, and perfectly intelligible when used in its proper place—the surviving language of gods and of antiquity—might I venture to call it the biblical speech, which, like that of the oracles, serves to illuminate and not to obscure the oratory or conversation of periods remote from it in date. More than this, Delphi had formed its own language, partly in connection with its own religious traditions, partly in connection with local dialect, and though this might become more difficult to be understood in course of time, yet it admitted of study, and there were special officers, both at Athens and at Sparta at all events, bound to keep up a familiarity with it. Undoubtedly these peculiarities of expression must have had a tendency to stereotype themselves in the course of time, to harden and stiffen as all language does, especially when ecclesiastics have the manipulation of it: and at Delphi, where erst the Pythia had chanted her untutored verses (inventing the hexameter by the way, according to the excellent Pausanias)—as all primitive literary expression is apt to take a rhythmic form—the temple in later times no doubt had its college of poets, who adapted the responses to the traditional metric conditions. But what seems to us obscurity of form could not have been primarily intentional.

It is of far greater importance that, in whatever form they were delivered, the oracles, as all testimony agrees in showing, exercised the moral force of a power directing men to those courses of action which were in harmony with the national progress and development on the one hand, on the other with the eternal laws of right. There is no obscurity in the counsels which the oracle must have given, because we know they were followed, to Battus the Prosperous, the second founder of Cyrene, or to Cypselus, the regenerator of Corinth. And if we ask for the fulfilment of a prophecy of evil we may remember the Sybarites, for whose murderous impiety vengeance was threatened by the oracle when affronted by a terrified inquiry, and whose city was shortly afterwards laid level with the ground by their neighbours of Croton. The god had no remedy for the fears of the evildoer but a warning of the approaching punishment. Not a pilgrimage to Delphi, nor gifts devoted to its sanctuary, would expiate the doom of insolence and sin.

And this brings us face to face with one other question which has often been asked with reference to the Delphic oracle. How far was it amenable to the moving and corrupting influences of power and party: to what extent was the god, through the Pythia, a mere instrument in the hands of the Delphic priesthood, and were these a mere instrument in the hands of those who chose to play upon it? As to the former part of the question it may seem idle to ascribe the inspiration of the Pythia to the exhalations

of the earth beneath the tripod, to the lustral waters of Castalia, to the laurel leaves chewed by the priestess before she addressed herself to her sacred task. On the other hand, it seems an equally unjustified assumption to suppose the Pythia to have been a mere tool in the hands of the sacerdotal college. We are informed that the women chosen were not, except in the earliest times, of a youthful age, and that they were simple and ignorant. To this latter statement, which is Plutarch's, we may attach as much value as we choose for the earlier times: but it seems clear that there was no training, no schooling of agents in the case. Pausanias knew of only one instance of the Pythia having been corrupted by a bribe, and then speedy punishment and deposition overtook both her and the corruptor. The Pythiæ, then, were women of the people, in constant contact, of course, with the influence of the temple, and in constant consciousness of the sentiments, the opinions, and the moral tone of its priesthood. These are the data which we possess, and from them we must draw our conclusions. If the oracles were in the main utterances of the divine sanction to courses of action commending themselves for confirmation, of the divine warning against the consequences of wrong, there is no difficulty in understanding how the Pythia should have been a fit and a ready agent for their primary expression. That in the course of time these utterances should have been—to use the word in no ill-meaning sense—*edited* by the priesthood, was simply an inevitable necessity. But herein lay precisely the significance of the oracle at the time of its greatest influence, that the ideas to which it gave expression were at once those of the Pythia who uttered, the priests who promulgated, and the leaders of the people who received them. Afterwards the priests became partisans, but so did, if I may use the expression, the very temple itself, and its Pythiæ with it. To my mind the part taken by these simple women in the operations of the oracle is one of the surest and at the same time most striking proofs of the vital sympathy which in its best days existed between it and the nation. The Pythia degenerated with the oracle, and though in its later times she may have “philippized” unconsciously, I have no doubt that she “philippized” with heart and mind, without having been bribed like her predecessor in the days of King Cleomenes.

When, therefore, we read in a critical historian* that the oracles which are handed down to us in the pages of Herodotus may be classified as mere puzzles wrought out by the ingenuity of a mythical age, as the expressions of a shrewd and politic ambiguity, as answers dictated by a calculation of probabilities or extorted by political and personal influence, as answers which enforce a moral principle, and lastly, as predictions made up after the event, we may acknowledge the accuracy of the classification, but need not by it be deterred from pursuing such reflections as the above. Why, as Cicero very pertinently observes.

* See Cox's *History of Greece*, vol. i. p. 273.

should we esteem Herodotus more veracious than Ennius?—in other words, every one of his statements—and among them those as to oracles more or less nearly accomplished—is open to the test of historical criticism, and this will no doubt prove many of them to have no value but that of legendary ornaments, and others to have been made up after the event. In the earlier times, however, it will be difficult to trace in more than one or two oracles—if, indeed, in more than one (for I cannot include the support given to the policy of the Alcæonidæ)—even a suspicion of corrupt influence. The ambiguous oracles will be found to contain less ambiguity from a moral point of view than from others; indeed, though the prediction which told Croesus that the passage of the Halys would be followed by the ruin of a great power may seem to have been uncommonly safe as a prophecy, was it not also undoubtedly sound as a warning? There remains that class of oracles of which unfortunately but few have descended to us, but which beyond all doubt was the largest and the most important of all. These were the oracles which upheld the distinction between right and wrong, which in the spirit of all true religion confirmed the conscience and encouraged the moral will, which did not trick the inquirer into tempting fate, but guided him in the path before the choice of which he was faltering, and sent him forward in it with a high heart, and with the blessing of the Pythian Apollo. These were the oracles which expressed the essence of the worship which they fostered—a worship in which no impure heart might engage, and from which the god rejected the questionings of impious minds.

But the sun is mounting over Parnassus; though he no longer shines upon the temples in all their glory of marble columns and golden statues, upon the treasures of Athens and Corinth and Sicyon, upon the endless memorials of gods and men—from Cronos' legendary stone to the golden lion of Croesus, and the bronze wolf by the great altar, with its mocking record of the rivalry between Athens and Sparta—upon the offerings from Coreyra in the Western seas and Tegea among the Arcadian hills and Tarentum in the Calabrian bay—upon the trophy of Marathon, and, alas! the trophy of Ægospotami—upon the gifts of warriors and the gifts of athletes, and all the mythical and historical array of which the list is written in the pages of Pausanias—upon all the wonders which survived the greatness of Delphi—upon its stadium and gymnasium and *lesche*, and the mighty order of its terraces, as yet unbroken by earthquake and decay and undefaced by the mean superstructure of a wayside village. It is time to pursue our journey over the crags and through the ravines of Parnassus, past the Corycian cave on the hillside, where of old the Delphians took refuge in days of the Persian danger, faint of heart, and not trusting in Apollo's power to protect his sanctuary. It is now deserted and lonely, for the very brigands have happily abandoned their haunts, and an eagle is swooping in the air, monarch of the solitude around. Thence we are to

cross the plain at the base of the central cone of the great mountain—on which a village, well-named Calybia, i.e. huts, recalls if you will the Cyclopean period of Greek architecture, if you will otherwise, the desolation of Achill Island on the Atlantic shore. Then, after slaking our thirst with lumps of snow at the *strunga* or shepherd's hut, whence in spring the flutes send their music through the hills, we dismount from our faithful beasts and climb the height of Parnassus, and survey a vast map shrouded in mist, but disclosing the whole expanse of country from the Thessalian to the Arcadian mountains. We shall sleep well that night among the vineyards and cottonfields of distant Arachova, and even the singing of the village maidens, armed with spindles and sharp tongues, will not prolong our vigils far beyond the midnight hour.

Our homeward journey will take us past the groves of the Daulian nightingale and the solitude of the Chæronean lion to Lebadea, the smiling and prosperous town by whose rushing streams lies the cave of Trophonius. Its oracle was a foundation of the Delphic Apollo, who, as one legend ran, rewarded the restless brethren Trophonius and Agamedes for their labours as the architects of many temples—among them his own at Delphi—by sending them a tranquil death on the seventh day after the completion of their task. But another legend told that Trophonius, escaping from a foe, had vanished under the earth at Lebadia, and here his oracle—as that of a chthonic god—was revered already in the days of the Persian Wars, and in later times—when the power and influence of Delphi had already sunk—still continued to be visited by eager inquirers, who here sought relief for their bodily maladies. The burnt-offering of a ram was the decisive sacrifice demanded by this deity; it was killed at night-time, when the votary descended into the cave to learn from the soothsaying priest whether Trophonius was favourable to his prayers. It was high morning, however, when we paid a rapid visit to the rocky recesses, where the niches still tell of the votive offerings, of the hope which sick men happily always bring to a physician who has confidence in himself, and where the streams hard by challenged us in vain to decide which of them is that of Memory, and which of Oblivion.

We might have profited by a draught from either before we some days afterwards found ourselves at home once more in Athens. From the stream of memory for much that will be sought in vain in this imperfect record; from the stream of oblivion for the tediousness, ineffable and indescribable, of the Bœotian plain. But whatever the morrow might bring, Parnassus lay behind us, probably to be visited no more—and enclosed in its mighty folds Delphi, never to be forgotten by any of its pilgrims.

A. W. WARD.

I Plex for certain Exotic Forms of Verse.

WHEN the poetess Louise Bertin put to Alfred de Musset the still unanswered question "What is poetry?" she received a celebrated rejoinder, the last and perhaps the happiest clause of which is:

*D'un sourire, d'un mot, d'un soupir, d'un regard
Faire un travail exquis.*

The answer was far from satisfying the demand of Mdlle. Bertin, but as a definition of, not poetry indeed, but the function of a poet, it left little to be desired. To make immortal art out of transient feeling, to give the impression of a finite mind infinite expansion, to chisel material beauty out of passing thoughts and emotions,—this is the labour of the poet; and it is on account of this conscious artifice and exercise of constructive power that he properly takes his place beside the sculptor and the painter. To recognise in poetry one of the fine arts seems curiously difficult to an ordinary mind. The use of the same symbols which are employed for the interpretation of thought in prose is probably the origin of the habitual impression that poetry is rather allied to philosophy than to art. Yet every artist in verse, however humble, is conscious from the first time that he strives to fashion his inarticulate music, that the work he tries to accomplish is in its essence plastic. The very images that occur to the mind in considering the history of poetry prove its analogy with the fine arts. What poet can be said to resemble Hegel or Locke in the sense that Dante parallels Giotto or Tennyson reminds us of Mendelssohn? Whether the analogy in these particular cases be judged to exist or not, there is at least nothing unreasonable in such a suggestion. We feel that these men progressed in parallel arts, fashioning rather than reflecting, creators and not contemplators. If therefore, as we must, we regard poetry as one of the fine arts, it need not surprise us to have to dismiss the purely spontaneous and untutored expression of it as of little else than historical interest. In the present age the warblings of poetic improvisation cannot expect more attention than the equally artless impromptus of an untaught musical talent. In the last century, just after the long lyrical drought was breaking up, the attention of Europe was called to several poets who improvised with genius. The peculiar gift of Burns may be classed with these; a more singular instance was that of the Swedish Bellman, whose impromptus still take a high place in the literature of his country, while his laboured pieces have been forgotten for a century. As a rule, however, where little pains is taken little pleasure results; the poems of certain con-

temporaries, composed with excessive facility, are doomed in their own lifetime to the fate that befell the *tours de force* of the painter Fa Presto. And among earnest writers of verse the question is not whether or not labour shall be expended on their work, but to what aim that labour should tend.

Every artist gifted with originality answers this question in his own way; but the history of literature proves that each age exercises a moulding influence on the whole group of its artists. Raphael, Milton, Beethoven did not appear like Stromboli, flaring out of a level sea of mediocrity, but rather as the final peak of an ascending range of talent; Shakspeare is more nearly approached by the smallest of the Elizabethan dramatists than by Sheridan or by Hugo. The same aims actuate, in a measure, all the artists of a vital period; and no one influence is exercised for a long time upon a group of active minds. It may be almost laid down as an axiom that no generation worships unmodified the gods of its immediate predecessor. If, therefore, we obtain a correct opinion of what is admired by the fathers, it is not paradoxical to take for granted that the same will not be admired by the sons. Let us consider, then, what were the technical characteristics of the English poetry of the beginning of this century. The philosophic simplicity of Wordsworth and the sensuous beauty of Keats, with a small admixture of Shelley's delicate music, were combined to form the basis upon which Tennyson stepped first into public notice. The worship of Milton by Keats, of Milton through Keats, pushed to an extravagant excess, set the Spasmodic School in motion; blustering blank verse, studded with unconnected beauties of fanciful phrase, formed the instrument for these brilliant discords. Style was utterly wanting, and the whole school passed into thin air, not without leaving a baneful influence, a tradition of formlessness behind it. In the Brownings the influence of Keats took another shape, and these great poets, surviving the wreck of the Spasmodists, were still bent more on vigour than grace, and worked in bronze rather than in silver. By a curious coincidence, however, all these writers, except in part Mrs. Browning, began to adopt blank verse as their favourite instrument; the Laureate, especially, laying aside one by one all the lyrical adornments of his youth, set himself to the construction of a system of blank verse, the lucidity, melody, and sweetness of which will be the wonder of posterity. At one time, so powerful was his personal example, there seemed a danger that our poetry would for a time abandon all other forms as completely as the age of Addison gave up all for the heroic couplet of Pope; the result being, of course, more disastrous in the modern instance, because it is so much easier to produce bad blank verse than bad rhymed decasyllables. The delicacy of Mr. Tennyson and the vigour of Mr. Browning were aped by hundreds of imitators, who proceeded no further than effeminacy in the first instance and ruggedness in the second.

It was obvious that a reaction must come, and it came in the simultaneous appearance of several learned and enthusiastic poets, whose

technical methods differed in almost every instance from those of the generation before them. I am not now concerned to defend or even to examine the revolution they effected in any but a technical sense. I do not anticipate that any one will deny that this last was needful. The dignity and service of rhyme, strangely neglected in the last generation, were insisted upon by the younger writers, who fed the exhausted sources of music with new combinations of old forms and with a happy reproduction of ancient measures. The dactylic rhythms of Mr. Swinburne, often incorrectly spoken of as anapestic, have undoubtedly given a classic grace and precision to a form too often dedicated in the last century to vulgar and trivial music. Mr. William Morris has induced the heroic measure, which had been thrown aside as a worn-out instrument, with a new spirit and unfamiliar if somewhat languid cadences. Mr. D. G. Rossetti in the sonnet, and his sister in the song, have added new wealth to our traditional heritage of melody. The verse of these writers is rich in colour, supple, vehement; their iambics, so far from lagging, are apt to overflow into a kind of running dactyl. Their aim, sometimes only too prominently expressed, is evidently to escape triviality and poverty of phrase; they recognise the value of unhackneyed words, whether realistically homely or pedantically ornate. It is in the nature of things that such a reaction in favour of form should be violently opposed and enthusiastically embraced; and also that, after a brief period of success, its popularity should be provisionally threatened by a revival of the elder manner. We have accordingly seen of late more than one writer of talent recur to the severer or less exacting style of thirty years ago. But the spirit of the time is against such a resuscitation of the past. Tennyson's mantle has not fallen upon his disciples, and they cannot hope to succeed him in fame. This seems especially the case in the matter of narrative blank verse; those who write epics of Heaven or Hell in this perilous measure do so at the risk of their reputation: such poems are certain of oblivion, weighed down irremediably by the burden of their facility.

The actual movement of the time, then, appears certainly to be in the direction of increased variety and richness of rhyme, elasticity of verse, and strength of form. The invertebrate rhapsodies of Sydney Dobell, so amazing in their beauty of detail and total absence of style, are now impossible. We may lack his inspiration and his insight, but we understand far better than he the workmanship of the art of verse. The sonnet, reduced by Sidney and Daniel—its original importers—to a weak quatorzain ending in a couplet, and first redeemed in its pure beauty by Milton, had fallen again into irregularity in spite of the revival of Wordsworth and Keats. Dobell, who is the very helot of stylistic depravity, wrote sonnets of fifteen, sixteen, eighteen lines, and rhymed them as seemed good in his own eyes. In the present generation we write sonnets on the pure Petrarchan model, and when, the other day, an elderly sonnetteer published a sonnet of thirteen lines and with

one poor rhymeless line, the publication of such a piece in a prominent magazine was felt to be a thorough anachronism, and its shortcoming was presently apologised for.

If it be asked what is the use of these limits, and why sonnets should of necessity have fourteen lines with four rhymes, in decasyllabic iambics, duly arranged? the answer is, because it has been proved in the history of literature that law is better than anarchy, and that the exact shape universally conceded to a form of verse by our ancestors is practically found, in spite of or because of its very difficulties, useful in the production of a certain kind of art. Those who are impatient of rules and prefer to be a law unto themselves, may turn elsewhere. Poetry offers a myriad branches in which they may exercise their liberty; they are not obliged to compose sonnets, but we have a right to demand that if they do so they should follow in the time-honoured footsteps of Petrarch and Milton. I have remarked, however, that the literary opinion of the time is generally in favour of exact form in literature, and I will take the liberty of supposing that those who do me the honour of following my argument unite in this opinion. It is on this assumption that I build the proposal which I am about to make. We allow that the revival of the old pure form of the sonnet is one which was indubitably required. That the rhymes of the octett must be two instead of four, instead of appalling us by its difficulty encourages us to brilliant effort. We acknowledge that the severity of the plan and the rich and copious recurrence of the rhyme serve the double end of repelling the incompetent workman and stimulating the competent. This being so, why should we not proceed to the cultivation of other fixed forms of verse, which flourished in the earliest days of modern poetic literature, and of which the sonnet, if the finest, is at least but one?

In point of fact, the movement I advocate has begun on all sides, with the spontaneity of an idea obviously ready to be born. I myself, without suggestion from any acquaintance, but merely in consequence of reading the early French poets, determined to attempt the introduction of the *ballade* and the *rondeau*. But, to my great surprise, I found that I had no right to claim the first invention of the idea. First on one hand, then on the other, I discovered that several young writers, previously unknown to me and to one another, had determined on the same innovation. For some time the idea was confined to conversation and private discussion. But these forms are now being adopted by a still wider circle, and the movement seems so general that the time has come to define a little more exactly what seems to be desirable in this matter and what not. In doing so I shall be as conservative as possible, laying no bondage on others, but pointing out, for the amusement of those who have not the opportunity to go minutely into the history of verse, what are the traditional and unique characteristics of the exotic forms which it seems desirable to adopt into English poetry. And in so doing I shall consider the six most important of the poetic creations of old France, the

rondel, the *rondeau*, the *triolet*, the *villanelle*, the *ballade*, and the *chant royal*. These six poems, with the sonnet, form a group which comprises in the earliest and latest literature of France a large proportion of what is most precious, most lyrical, and most witty in the national verse. Each has a fixed form, regulated by traditional laws, and each depends upon richness of rhyme and delicate workmanship for its successful exercise. The first three are habitually used for joyous or gay thought, and lie most within the province of *jeu-d'esprit* and epigram; the last three are usually wedded to serious or stately expression, and almost demand a vein of pathos.

The *Rondel* is a poem, written, like the sonnet, in fourteen lines, each properly containing, however, only eight syllables. These fourteen lines have but two rhymes throughout, so arranged that the rhymes in the first, fourth, fifth, ninth, and twelfth lines correspond, and also those in the second, third, sixth, tenth, and eleventh lines. Nothing has been said about the seventh, eighth, thirteenth, and fourteenth lines, because these are the exact repetition, twice over, of the first and second. There is thus a kind of refrain repeated at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the poem, and this is the leading characteristic of the form of verse. There can be no doubt that in this refrain, originally a musical contrivance connected with the vocal round to which the *rondel* was sung, we have the source of the jingling refrain found in so many Scotch and Danish ballads. For these latter, though more barbaric in form, are probably later in date than the invention of the *rondel* and the true *ballade*. In the burden of a border ballad there is often a charm of wild melody, but generally, it must be confessed, there is also a break in continuity which is annoying and even absurd. The burdens written in imitation of these, in modern ballads, seem particularly affected. The refrain of the *rondel*, however, was not only always an integral part of the poem, but the charm and force of the whole mainly depended on the skilful introduction of these thrice-repeated words, with a delicate *nuance* of change of meaning in each case. It is plain, therefore, that in the resuscitation of the artistic *rondel* we do not fall into the same danger of imbecility as we do in imitating the untutored burden of an epical ballad, a form of verse, be it said in passing, of all the most hopeless for our age to reproduce.

The invention of the *rondel* has been traditionally ascribed to King Thibaut VI., from whose erudite court so many of the streams of modern art, eloquence, poetry, and music are dimly surmised to have proceeded. At least it may be confidently supposed to be an invention of the thirteenth century. In Eustache Deschamps, a generation later, we find it full-blown and covered with gracious blossoms, but it was in the hands of another royal poet that it was to reach its supreme cultivation. Readers of the CORNHILL MAGAZINE will not need to be reminded of a recent article in which the adventures and pastimes of Charles d'Orléans were vividly brought before them. This prince, a poet full of the

technical learning and skill of his age, took the rondel under his peculiar patronage, and produced a collection of these poems which has never been approached. Charles, in short, is the king and master of the rondel, and to appreciate its grace and art we must turn to his pages. One of the most famous, which Mr. A. Lang has carefully translated, stands thus in the original :—

Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye,
Et s'est vestu de broderie
Du soleil luisant, cler et beau.

Il n'y a beste ne oyseau
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie :
Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.

Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent, en livrée jolie,
Gouttes d'argent d'orfaverie,
Chascun s'abille de nouveau,
Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluye.

This is very sweet and delicate. The reader must now, having heard the prince in his native French, listen to him in the English of his captivity :—

Bewere, my trewe innocent hert,
How ye hold with her aliauns,
That somtym with word of plasúns
Resceyved you under covert.
Thynke how the stroke of love comsmert
Without waryng or defiauns.
Bewere, my trewe innocent hert,
Hold ye hold with her aliauns.
And ye shall pryvely or appert
See her by me in lovè's dauns,
With her faire femenyn contenauns
Ye shall never fro her astert.
Bewere, my trewe innocent hert,
How ye hold with her aliauns.

"Comsmert" is good, but, on the whole, it was possible in those days to write worse English verses. Occleve and Lydgate proved it in several execrably bad rondels, one of which, by the way, Mr. Henry Morley has lately quoted, with a note, which shows that he has not apprehended the distinction between the rondel and the rondeau. This distinction will be more clearly perceived by a comparison of the two specimens given above with those of the rondeau to be presently given, than by any number of pedantic definitions.

The bibliography of the rondel is simple. An essentially naïve form, it was the first to disappear in the French Renaissance and the last to

recur in our own age. As early as the time of Clément Marot it gave way to the rondeau, and in modern French, examples of it are to be found, as far as I know, only in *Les Occidentales* of M. Théodore de Banville. In English, I have not been able to trace any rondels later than those of Occleve; but I am enabled, by the kindness of my friend Mr. Austin Dobson, to quote, from a volume of his now in the press, one which exemplifies in a very charming manner the form and quality of the pure rondel :—

Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times,
When only coin can ring,
And no one cares for rhymes!
Alas! for him, who climbs
To Aganippe's spring;
Too hard it is to sing,
In these untuneful times!
His kindred clip his wing,
His feet the critic limes;
If Fame her laurel bring,
Old age his forehead rimes;
Too hard it is to sing
In these untuneful times!

I note that in this, and in each of a group of rondels which he has shown me, Mr. Dobson introduces an intentional deviation from the French tradition in a slight re-arrangement of the lines. I think this of no importance, the number of rhymes and the position of the refrain being unaltered. Banville, in some late rondels, admits a more serious divergency in the entire omission of the fourteenth line.

The rondel, charming and piquant as it is, can hardly be resuscitated in England with much success; the copiousness of the refrain becomes monotonous and tedious. I cannot but think, however, that for comic and satiric verse it is exceedingly well adapted, its ingenious naïveté and its innocent repetition giving special point to an insulting apostrophe or a sly squib. Examples of such a use can scarcely be given here with propriety, but the suggestion may be left to germinate in the mind of the reader.

The Rondeau is of all the forms under discussion the one which has hitherto shown the most vitality in England; it has not the extreme antiquity of the others, and seems as specially adapted to crystallise modern wit as the sonnet to enclose modern reflection. The earliest master of the rondeau was Clément Marot, in whose hands it took its present form; what that form is, the following definition may suffice to show. The rondeau is a poem written in iambic verse of eight or ten syllables, and in thirteen lines; it must have but two rhymes. It contains three stanzas, the first and third of which have five lines, and the second three; there is also a refrain, consisting of the first word or words in the first line, added, without rhyming with anything, to the ends of the eighth line and of the thirteenth line. It has been well said that this refrain is at the same time "plus et moins qu'un vers;" for though

it is not counted as a line, it forms the most salient point of the poem, and gives movement to the whole. The French have always been justly proud of this airy creation. It is true that Joachim du Bellay, bent on the introduction of classic forms, decided severely against its use in his treatise on poetry, and that at his desire it fell into contempt at the Renaissance; but when the reaction came, it was perhaps for this very reason that the rondeau was taken into favour when the ballade, the sonnet, and the villanelle were abandoned. The rondeau was fated to enjoy a brief period of splendid revival in the middle of the seventeenth century, and it was at that time that its most brilliant examples were composed. In the joyous society of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, when literature of the gracious and delicate sort attained such a luxurious growth, the rondeau was the favourite instrument of poets and poetesses who out-vied one another in graceful trifling and ingenious compliment. It was not a great or heroic period in letters, and what of strength French literature had, flirted but indifferently with the Rambouillet muse; but of exquisite taste and stylistic precision there was no lack, and these also are precious qualities. Of the whole group Voiture was the acknowledged head, *facile princeps* among the wits, and he has never been rivalled as an exponent of the whimsical beauties of the rondeau. Although he wrote many, only thirty have been preserved, so daintily selected that there is no one among them that is not a little masterpiece. The first of the series, traditionally addressed to Mdlle. Julie herself, has been imitated by almost every succeeding writer of rondeaux, but never with the same audacious ease of manner. It is a good example of the typical rondeau:—

Ma foy, c'est fait de moy, car Isabeau
 M'a conjuré de luy faire un Rondeau :
 Cela me met en une peine extrême.
 Quoy treize vers, huit en *eau*, cinq en *ème*,
 Je luy ferois aussi-tôt un bateau !
 En voilà cinq pourtant en un monceau :
 Faisons en huit, en invoquant Brodeau,
 En puis mettons, par quelque stratagème,
 Ma foy, c'est fait !
 Si je pouvois encore de mon cerveau
 Tirer cinq vers, l'ouvrage seroit beau ;
 Mais cependant, je suis dedans l'onzième,
 Et si je croy que je fais le douzième,
 En voilà treize ajustez au niveau.
 Ma foy, c'est fait !

Victor Brodeau, here invoked, was a contemporary of Marot, now little read, but the writer of some admirable rondeaux. After Voiture, the most eminent poets of the rondeau were his contemporaries, Benserade and Sarazin. Benserade, in particular, carried the culture of this form of verse to so absurd an excess that he translated the whole *Metamorphoses* of Ovid into rondeaux, and had his monstrous exercise sumptuously printed at the King's press with elaborate illustrations, at a cost,

it is said, of 10,000 francs. After the age of Louis XIV. the rondeau was never entirely abandoned in France; and Piron uses a form of it, which I suppose he invented, just before the modern revival. Another form of rondeau, into the characteristics of which it is not needful to enter here, was adopted by Alfred de Musset; and French poets, since the day of the last-mentioned, have composed rondeaux abundantly.

In several English poets of the seventeenth century the influence of the form is strongly marked. Charles Cotton, in particular, wrote one, quoted by Dr. Guest. It is a very ungallant appeal against matrimony. I am indebted to my friend the editor for my next example, a rondeau in one of Pope's letters. The earliest set of rondeaux, however, as far as I am able to discover, occurs much later, and in a most unlikely quarter, the *Rolliad*. This farrago of satires in prose and verse, originally published in 1784, was written by a group of politicians and men of fashion as a means of ridiculing the ministry of Pitt. It had an ephemeral success and is now unread, but it contained a great deal of wit that has not yet evaporated. The pieces were anonymous, but I find from MS. sources that the only part of the book bearing upon our inquiry—namely, a set of pure rondeaux—was composed by Dr. Laurence, the friend of Burke. These are five in number, and they are all most carefully and accurately constructed on the model of Voiture. Of these satires on North, Eden, Pitt, and Dorset—some of them indelicate and all of them virulent—this is the one most convenient for quotation:—

Around the tree, so fair, so green,
 Erewhile, when summer shone serene,
 Lo! where the leaves in many a ring
 Before the wintry tempest's wing
 Fly scattered o'er the dreary scene:
 Such, NORTH, thy friends. Now cold and keen
 Thy winter blows; no sheltering screen
 They stretch, no graceful shade they fling
 Around the tree.
 Yet grant, just Fate, each wretch so mean,
 Like EDEN—pining in his spleen
 For posts, for stars, for strings,—may swing
 On two stout posts in hempen string!
 Few eyes would drop a tear, I ween,
 Around the tree.

The success of the *Rolliad* caused several imitators of these pieces to try their hand, and rondeaux are not unfrequent in the periodical prints of the beginning of this century, but always, as far as I have seen, of the meanest merit. Recently, the rondeau has again been widely cultivated. Mr. Swinburne published in 1866 two poems which he called *Rondels*, but which were really rondeaux, though very impure in form. In 1873 I myself printed seven rondeaux, more like the true poem, but still disobedient to the laws of Voiture; but later in the same year there appeared a volume of *Poems* by Mr. Robert Bridges which contained three rondeaux, perfect in form, the first I think published since the days

of Dr. Laurence. Since 1873 rondeaux have become more common, and I have since found that Mr. Austin Dobson and Mr. Theo. Marzials had already written them before those above mentioned came under their notice. This spontaneous growth of rondeaux is a curiosity of literature not unworthy of record.

It should be remembered that it is a great point in writing humorous or serio-comic rondeaux that there should be a play of words in the refrain. For instance, Théodore de Banville addresses one to Désirée Rondeau, in which the refrain "Rondeau" at one time refers to the lady's name and at another to the form of verse. I notice that the young poet Jean Richepin, in his new volume *Les Caresses*, carries this quite into the region of punning, for he begins a rondeau "votre beau thé" and ends it "votre beauté." It will be difficult in English to carry out this custom without losing some of the distinction and delicacy which are the indispensable qualities of this kind of poetry; to be the least vulgar would be absolutely destructive to the success of such writing, but I think a play upon words in the refrain should be attempted.

It would be pedantic to enter minutely in this paper into all the varieties of the various forms of verse. Jean de la Fontaine—who was a far more curious and many-sided poet than the average reader supposes, and very far from being merely a fabulist—uses a *rondeau redoublé*, which is a very pretty poem, but which I must not linger to describe. Let us pass on to the third of my six forms.

The Triolet is a very dainty little poem; we are all apt to fall into the sin of favouritism, and I confess I am unduly partial to the triolet. It is charming; nothing can be more ingenuously mischievous, more playfully sly, than this tiny trill of epigrammatic melody, turning so simply on its own innocent axis. The triolet is composed of eight lines, on two rhymes, the first line being repeated as the fourth and the first two as the seventh and eighth. The arrangement of the rhymes can be best understood by the quotation of a triolet that seems to me to be absolutely perfect, the work of M. Théodore de Banville, who is unrivalled in his skill in this sort of workmanship. It is entitled *A Singing Lesson*:—

Moi, je regardais ce cou-là.
 "Maintenant chantez," me dit Paule.
 Avec des mines d'Attila
 Moi, je regardais ce cou-là.
 Puis, un peu de temps s'écoula . . .
 Qu'elle était blanche, son épaule!
 Moi, je regardais ce cou-là;
 "Maintenant chantez," me dit Paule.

The earliest triolet that has been discovered is in the *Cleomedès* of Adenèz-le-Roi, who wrote in the early part of the thirteenth century. This is exactly similar in form to that quoted above, which was composed at least 600 years later. It does not seem that the triolet, however, was much used by the poets of the Middle Ages. Mediæval wit,

as we know, was lumbering, and not easily to be repressed within such dainty limits. At the Renaissance it ceased to be employed at all, but it suddenly became the rage in the society of the Hôtel Rambouillet about the year 1648. Voiture is not known to have ever written a triolet; but at his death, which occurred in 1648, Sarazin wrote a pompous funeral poem—probably the most funny serious elegy ever composed—in which, among other strange mourners, he makes “the poor little Triolet, all in tears,” trot by the bier of the dead poet. In the next year, 1649, Gérard de Saint Amant, in the preface to his *Nobles Triolets*, refers to the sudden new fashion very fantastically, saying that it has lately pleased Apollo, God of Parnassus, to ennoble *le pauvre petit Triolet*, and that in consequence he does homage to the deity in that shape; this being the introduction to a batch of no less than sixty-four. The vogue lasted for a considerable time, but Boileau, in his *Art Poétique*, in 1669, though he patronises the rondeau in a celebrated couplet,

Tout poëme est brillant de sa propre beauté,
Le rondeau, né gaulois, a la naïveté,

does not so much as mention the triolet. Piron, and one or two others, used it in the beginning of the present century; and in our own time it has been resuscitated by Théodore de Banville with such success that triolets have become like the sands upon the shore in Parisian newspapers and volumes of verse. M. Charles Delieux has composed an air which has been very popular, and which suits all regular triolets precisely.

In England the triolet is a new comer, but it has already begun to be cultivated. The first specimens printed here, as far as I have been able to discover, were two by Mr. Bridges, in 1873. They were not quite so airy as one might wish, but still, in honour of their precedence, let one be quoted here:—

When first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress,
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met? We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

Triolets are now by no means rare in English. Mr. Austin Dobson, in particular, has written several, which seem to me full of the delicate gaiety of the best French verse. Here is one of them, the epilogue, or *Urceus exit*, to a series of “Rose-leaves”:—

I intended an Ode,
And it turned into Triolets.
It began *à la mode*:
I intended an Ode,
But Rose crossed the road
With a bunch of fresh violets;
I intended an Ode,
And it turned into Triolets.

There is a great temptation to treat the triolet simply as a stanza, and to write a long poem in triolets. Several poets have done so once, and one, Alphonse Daudet—now so famous as the author of *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné*—with decided success. I do not think, however, that any one would repeat this experiment twice. In the course of an extended poem the incessant repetition of the couplet becomes tiresome, and a vapid air is not easily avoided. It may, however, possibly be done once in a lifetime.

The true vocation of the triolet is certainly epigram. In this capacity it was used as a trenchant political weapon in the last days of the French Empire. It surpasses in ease, rapidity, and melody the conventional epigram of two heroic lines, a fit instrument in the hands of the followers of Pope and Racine, but unsuited to our less artificial age. It is singularly well adapted for personalities, and the abusive paragraphs of some of the newspapers of the day might be at least as effective if couched in smart triolets as they are now in awkward prose. Indeed, this very winter one of our satiric prints has adopted the plan of publishing lampoons in the form of rondels and triolets.

It does not appear that any critic has noticed that the triolet is a condensed rondel. Take, however, from a rondel of Charles d'Orléans the third, fourth, sixth, eighth, eleventh, and twelfth lines, and what remains is a pure triolet in form. In the same way a rondel might be expanded out of a well-filled triolet.

We now come to the three forms more elaborate and serious, for which a pathetic or passionate rendering seems almost imperative. The Villanelle has been called "the most ravishing jewel worn by the Muse Erato." It is unusual, as befits a precious thing, since its construction is so difficult and its nature so delicate that it requires a peculiar mood and moment for its composition. I do not find that much has been recorded of its history, but it dates back at least as far as the fifteenth century. It is a poem written in tercets and on two rhymes, the first and third verse of the first stanza continuing to alternate as the third line of each successive stanza until they finally form the close as a couplet. An example, written about 1560 by Jean Passerat, the great Hellenist, will show more plainly this singular and charming manner of construction :—

J'ay perdu ma tourterelle.
Est-ce point celle que j'oy ?
Je veux aller après elle.

Tu regrette ta femelle,
Hélas ! aussi fais-je moy.
J'ay perdu ma tourterelle.

Si ton amour est fidelle,
Aussi est formi ma joy ;
Je veux aller après elle.

Ta plainte se renouvelle :
Toujours plaindre je me doy :
J'ay perdu ma tourterelle.

En ne voyant plus la belle
Plus rien ne beau je ne voy :
Je veux aller après elle.

Mort, que tant de fois j'appelle
Pren—ce qui se donne à toy !
J'ay perdu ma tourterelle ;
Je veux aller après elle.

This dear dove of Passerat's seems to me quite as sweet as Lesbia's sparrow, and such a pretty grief is, worthily enshrined in such a dainty form. It appears that villanelles may be any length, if only they retain this number and arrangement of rhymes. In modern France Théodore de Banville and Philoxène Boyer have written famous villanelles. In English I do not think any have yet been printed, except one by the present writer, published in 1874 in the *Athenæum*. In the dearth of examples, I may perhaps be pardoned if I quote here another which has not hitherto seen the light :—

Wouldst thou not be content to die
When low-hung fruit is hardly clinging,
And golden Autumn passes by ?

If we could vanish, thou and I,
While the last woodland bird is singing,
Wouldst thou not be content to die ?

Deep drifts of leaves in the forest lie,
Red vintage that the frost is flinging,
And golden Autumn passes by.

Beneath this delicate rose-gray sky,
While sunset bells are faintly ringing,
Wouldst thou not be content to die ?

For wintry webs of mist on high
Out of the muffled earth are springing,
And golden Autumn passes by.

O now when pleasures fade and fly,
And Hope her southward flight is winging,
Wouldst thou not be content to die ?

Lest Winter come, with wailing cry,
His cruel icy bondage bringing,
When golden Autumn hath passed by,

And thou, with many a tear and sigh,
While life her wasted hands is wringing,
Shalt pray in vain for leave to die
When golden Autumn hath passed by.

The Ballade is the most lordly and imposing of the forms commonly used in archaic French. If we include with it the Chant Royal, to which it is closely allied, it was this form of verse which completely ruled French poetry during the fourteenth century, and which has constantly reappeared ever since. After what has been said above, it is

hardly needful to repeat that the ballade made classic by Deschamps and Villon has nothing whatever in common with the romances sung by wandering minstrels in Germany and Scotland, and known to us from time immemorial as *ballads*. The one is a precious and delicate work of art, the other a much more vital and stirring form of poetry often, but wholly artless and spontaneous. It would be difficult to point out two poems, each admirable, more diametrically opposed than the border ballad of *Chevy Chase* and the ballade which Villon made for himself and his companions when they were waiting to be hanged. The exercise needed to build up the three stanzas of the ballade, like the stories of a house, with the crowning *envoi*, was especially pleasing to the minutely restless, frivolously curious temper of the late Middle Ages. The result was hundreds and thousands of ballades, written upon every conceivable subject, about forty of which are immortal, and the rest hopelessly buried among the ruins of dead thought. In the Royal French Library there are MS. collections of countless ballades by every known and unknown writer of the period, testifying beyond the shadow of doubt to the unrivalled popularity of the form. There still exist over 150 by Eustache Deschamps, though the greater part of the writings of that friend of Chaucer's have perished. In Henry de Croy's *L'art et science de rhétorique pour faire rigmes et ballades*, an invaluable treatise of French poetics, printed in 1493, but having a much earlier character, the ballade is taken, as a matter of course, as being the most important of all branches of the art of rhyming. And yet the difficulty of composing a ballade, even in so richly rhymed a language as old French, is very considerable. Henry de Croy recognizes three sorts of ballades: *Ballade commune*, *Ballade balladante*, and *Ballade fratryse*. We need not trouble ourselves with these nice distinctions; the first-mentioned is the type to which all modern examples belong. This, however, has itself two varieties, according as it is written in verses of eight or ten syllables. I cannot face the tediousness of describing in detail each of these forms. I shall presently give an example in English of the latter, and if the reader will carefully note the arrangement of the rhymes, the recurrence of the refrain and the number of lines, I need not go more into detail. It must be particularly noted, however, that only three rhymes are used in all the twenty-eight lines, that the refrain contains the chief thought or most memorable sentiment of the poem, and that the *envoi* ought to begin with *Prince*, or some equivalent, such as *King*, *Queen*, or *Sire*. The ballade of eight syllables being thus defined, that of ten syllables differs from it only in having two more syllables in each stanza, and one more in the *envoi*, and in a fuller range of rhymes, four being permitted in the thirty-five lines.

Some of the earliest ballads in existence bear the name of the chronicler Jehan Froissart. But Messire Guy de la Trémouille is supposed to have actually been the first to devise the elaborate rules of construction which have been in force ever since. This worthy was guard of the Oriflamme

in 1383, and died in 1398, leaving behind him a great fame of chivalry and gracious science. But it is Eustache Deschamps who is usually accredited with this honour, and undoubtedly this restless child of song, amid the eternal pilgrimages of his wandering life, found time to push the cultivation of the ballade to a most refined pitch. He even wrote an *Art of making Chansons, Ballades, Virelays, and Rondels*, in prose, which is a most precious relic of the age. Christine de Pisan, called La Désolée, was a famous composer of mournful ballads, and Charles d'Orléans wrote many when he was in prison in England. Thus we are led up to the name which is as supreme in the department of the ballade as Petrarch in that of the sonnet—François Villon. He does not seem to have written ballades in hundreds, as many of his contemporaries did; on the contrary, only between thirty and forty are with any certainty attributed to him, but among these are several which for sincerity, passion, and lyrical power, are to be compared with none but the very finest imaginative writing of the late Middle Ages. In Mr. D. G. Rossetti's translation, the *Dames du Temps Jadis* has become widely popular in English, and Mr. Swinburne has lately printed a version of that *Contre les Mesdisans de la France*, with the most absolute retention of the intricate measure. At one time it was hoped that these two poets would publish a volume of selected pieces from Villon, and I believe it is not too late to hope for such a book from Mr. Swinburne. Among the self-assured and comely court poesy of the day, these sinister and bitter songs, full of agony and revolt, rise with an enthralling strangeness and with the charm of an absolute sincerity. Almost alone among the productions of their time, they allow us to see what really were the sorrows and degradations of the mediæval poor. In this disreputable poet of the slums, this friend of harlots and men condemned to be hanged, the common people raised the first of the voices that took four hundred years to make themselves veritably heard. The next great poet who employed the ballade was Clément Marot, who learned the art from his father, Jehan Marot, a great proficient. After his day there was a long pause of more than a hundred years; the great tide of the Renaissance swept over the ballade as over other forms, and it only reappeared in the hands of the poets of the Hôtel Rambouillet. It had by that time undergone a great change. It was no longer the resonant and plaintive harp upon whose strings Villon had recounted his sorrow and Marot his fits of deep devotional ardour; in the school of wit it became an exquisite weapon of elegant badinage and sprightly malice. Voiture's celebrated ballade on the *Beau Monsieur de Neuf-Germain*, with its

L'autre jour le grand Apollon,
Père du jour et de la gloire,
Tenoit au ciel un violon
Marqueté d'ébene et d'ivoire,

is quite a model of distinction and grace in comic verse. The examples of his contemporaries, Sarazin and Bussy-Rabutin, are of the same order,

while Jean de la Fontaine protested in favour of a more serious treatment, and excelled in poems which were the dying utterance of an art smothered in rhetoric. Saint-Beuve revived the form of the ballade, and Théodore de Banville has resuscitated it in its ancient spirit. Albert Glatigny, the Villon of our day, must not be forgotten in this list of names.

In our own country the long-winded John Gower, before he began to rhyme in English, wrote a great number of French ballades, which have been printed in the present century by the Roxburgh Club. One of them has been translated by Mr. Henry Morley. The Chaucer of 1561 contains a number of poems, attributed to himself and Lydgate, which are called "Balades," but which are merely pieces in rhyme royal, so arranged as to imitate the French ballade, without its severity of form. It was not, however, till 1876 that the first pure ballades were printed in English. Mr. Austin Dobson's "Ballad of the Prodigals" appeared in May, and Mr. Swinburne's "Ballad of Dreamland" in September of that year. I will quote the latter as an excellent type of all that a ballade should be:—

I hid my heart in a nest of roses,
 Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
 In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
 Under the roses I hid my heart.
 Why would it sleep not? Why should it start,
 When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
 What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
 Only the song of a secret bird.
 Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
 And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
 Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,
 And the wind is unquieter still than thou art.
 Doth a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
 Does the pang still fret thee of hope deferred?
 What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?
 Only the song of a secret bird.
 The green land's name that a charm encloses,
 It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
 And sweet as the fruit on its tree that grows is,
 It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
 The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
 And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
 No hound's note wakens the wild-wood hart,
 Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI,

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
 To sleep for a season and hear no word
 Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
 Only the song of a secret bird.

That the writer of this poem permits no click of the machinery to be perceived in the musical periods of his recurrent rhymes, is due to his

eminent instinct for form, and not, as the careful reader will note, to any slurring of the excessively difficult rules of the ballade. Before leaving the subject, two more translated ballades must be mentioned—one by Mr. A. Lang from Villon, and Mr. Longfellow's of Marot's "Frère Lubin."

But if the ballade be elaborate, the Chant Royal is the final *tour-de-force*, the *ne plus ultra* of legitimate difficulty in the construction of a poem. Henry de Croy derives the title of this form from the fact that persons excelling in the composition of chants royaux were worthy to be crowned with garlands, like conquerors or kings. It is a moot point among students whether the ballade or the chant royal be the earlier and original poem. Eustache Deschamps wrote both, and confounded the one with the other. It was always dedicated to more stately and heroic themes than the ballade. The chant royal was reserved for the celebration of divine mysteries, or for the exploits of some heroic race. It was more extended than the ballade, containing five instead of three stanzas, each of eleven lines, and in the sixty-one lines of which it was composed, five rhymes might be used. Clément Marot was the great master of the chant royal, and he has left several magnificent examples of its exercise. The solemnity of a religious ceremony, something of the joyous ecstacy of an *anæsthesia* is required for the rolling and mounting music of the chant royal. It has rarely been used in modern French, except by the infinitely skilful De Banville, and in English not a single example has been printed. I am therefore bound to apologize for quoting the unpublished chant royal of a writer whom I ought to be the last to remember. I am led to do so in order to give a pure example of construction in this as in the previous forms discussed:—

Behold, above the mountains there is light,
A streak of gold, a line of gathering fire,
And the dim East hath suddenly grown bright
With pale ærial flame, that drives up higher
The lurid airs that all the long night were
Breasting the dark ravines and coverts bare;
Behold, behold! the granite gates unclose,
And down the vales a lyric people flows,
Who dance to music, and in dancing fling
Their frantic robes to every wind that blows,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

Nearer they press, and nearer still in sight,
Still dancing blithely in a seemly choir;
Tossing on high the symbol of their rite,
The cone-tipped thyrsus of a god's desire;
Nearer they come, tall damsels flushed and fair,
With ivy circling their abundant hair,
Onward, with even pace, in stately rows,
With eye that flashes, and with cheek that glows,
And all the while their tribute-songs they bring,
And newer glories of the past disclose,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

The pure luxuriance of their limbs is white,
 And flashes clearer as they draw the nigher,
 Bathed in an air of infinite delight,
 Smooth without wound of thorn or fleck of mire,
 Borne up by song as by a trumpet's blare,
 Leading the van to conquest, on they fare,
 Fearless and bold, whoever comes or goes,
 These shining cohorts of Bacchantes close,
 Shouting and shouting till the mountains ring,
 And forests grim forget their ancient woes,
 And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

And youths are there for whom full many a night
 Brought dreams of bliss, vague dreams that haunt and tire,
 Who rose in their own ecstasy bedight,
 And wandered forth through many a scourging brier,
 And waited shivering in the icy air,
 And wrapped the leopard-skin about them there,
 Knowing, for all the bitter air that froze,
 The time must come, that every poet knows,
 When he shall rise and feel himself a king,
 And follow, follow where the ivy grows,
 And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

But oh ! within the heart of this great flight,
 Whose ivory arms hold up the golden lyre,
 What form is this of more than mortal height?
 What matchless beauty, what inspired ire!
 The brindled leopards know the prize they bear
 And harmonise their steps with stately care;
 Bent to the morning, like a living rose,
 The immortal splendour of his face he shows.
 And, where he glances, leaf, and flower, and wing
 Tremble with rapture, stirred in their repose,
 And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

ENVOI.

Prince of the flute and ivy, all thy foes
 Record the bounty that thy grace bestows,
 But we, thy servants, to thy glory cling,
 And with no frigid lips our songs compose,
 And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

It is to be noted that this long poem of sixty-one lines, and the sonnet of fourteen lines, and *le pauvre petit Triolet* of only eight, bear precisely the same relation to one another. Each is complete in itself, and bound to fill with the expression of a single idea the exact limits of a traditional form. If one should essay to write a chant royal, and break down under the weight of rhymes in the fifth stanza, it would be entirely illegal to introduce a modification for the purpose of arriving safely at the *envoi*. This is an example of that vague "poetical licence" which incompetent workmen are so fond of falling back upon, and which in reality does not exist. If a sculptor sets himself to carve a face out

of marble there is no sculpturesque licence that permits him to stick on a plaster nose because he finds it too difficult to chisel the marble outline, or because he has carelessly cut too deep into the substance. It is only in poetry that persons without an instinct for form are allowed to play tricks of this kind, and it cannot be too distinctly said that they are not allowed to do this except by the licentious laws of their own making. English literature is distinctly injured, and we approach a step nearer to chaos by the existence of Sydney Dobell's sonnets.

But this just zeal for form must not blind us to the risk we run of chasing the outside of a leaky goblet. Form itself is of no use whatever if there be no matter for the form to enclose. There could plainly be composed pure rondeaux and ballades in nonsense verses, poems that would have all the exterior distinction of style, with no interior meaning at all. Sooner than arrive at such a conclusion, let us throw up all form whatever; yes, even desert rhythm and metre altogether, and adopt the uncouth prose in which a certain American rhapsodist clothes his prophetic utterances, leaping—to use the old figure of Diogenes—upon the pride of the poets, but with a greater pride than theirs. I trust we are not yet such empty vessels. I hope I may be dead before the English poets take Walt Whitman for their model in style. But there is always the danger of using elaborate and beautiful measures to conceal poverty of thought, and my plea would be incomplete if I left this objection to it unstated. The only excuse for writing rondeaux and villanelles is the production of poems that are charming to a reader who takes no note of their elaborate form; they should be attractive in spite of, and not because of, their difficulty. The true test of success is that the poem should give the reader an impression of spontaneity and ease, and that the attention should be attracted by the wit, or fancy, or pathos, in the thoughts and expression, and not, until later study, by the form at all. Let it not, however, be for this reason imagined that the labour is thankless and the elaboration needless. Half the pleasure given to the reader, half the sense of richness, completeness, and grace which he vaguely perceives and unconsciously enjoys, is due to the labour the poet has expended. Who shall say how much the severity and awful force of the "Divine Comedy" are not tempered and mellowed for us by the exquisite ebb and flow of the *terza rima* with its endless recurrent harmonies of rhyme? Who would ever follow the servants of the "Faery Queen" through the labyrinths of windless moor and languid forest if it were not for the rich music of the stanza that accompanies them? In spite of Milton, in spite of Tennyson, the world can never grow too old to be bewitched by the siren of rhyme.

E. W. G.

Japanese Miniature Odes.

THERE are, probably, few nations that do not point to their poetical literature as their chiefest glory. In England, in Germany, in Italy, in Greece, the national poets are by their countrymen awarded the palm over the great prose writers, while even in France itself, where, to an outsider, the distance between a Pascal and a Racine, between Voltaire as author of *Mahomet* and the *Henriade* and Voltaire as author of the *Siècle de Louis XIV.* appears like a yawning chasm, the compatriots of those writers are very loth to allow so trenchant a judgment, and would often seem, indeed, entirely reversing it, to point to the laurels of a Racine, a Corneille, and even a Boileau as the chief national title to imperishable renown.

In Japan, however, this rule does not hold. There the prose and the poetry of the classic age take equal rank in the popular appreciation, and, indeed, in countless cases it is the same men and the same women that have attained to equal celebrity both as prosaists and as poets. The foreign critic will feel disposed to re-echo this impartial judgment; for it will strike him forcibly, on perusing the classic literature of Japan, that the same faults and the same excellencies stamp all its productions (except, perhaps, the very earliest)—the same insinuating graces of style, the same love of nature, the same pathetic, and, to us Westerns, modern-seeming, tenderness, the same harping upon a few ideas, and the same absence of philosophic depth. Few tasks, indeed, could be more difficult than to have to draw any code of morals, any approach to a system of metaphysics from the writings of the poets of Japan—an admission which will appear to many Western readers to be the acknowledgment of a grave deficiency, while others, perhaps, who, in this utilitarian age, would welcome a beautiful thing all the more warmly for its being useless, may be weak-minded enough to feel a certain satisfaction on learning that there is at least one literature wholly governed by the precept that delight—not instruction—should be poetry's end and aim, and that the poet's mission is fully accomplished if he leaves our minds dazzled with the graceful flights of his imagination, and our ears ringing with the most harmonious cadences. It is not, however, pretended that the great family likeness running all through the productions of the Japanese classic age, and which is but a natural result of a concentration and unity of national life almost unparalleled in the history of any other land, amounts to an absolute identity of characteristics in their various branches; nor can it be here attempted to discuss in detail the features

of a whole literature. Not even an appreciation of the poetry as a whole comes within the scope of this paper. But, leaving aside the religious songs and the longer odes of the earliest ages, as well as the lyric drama* of a somewhat later period, we must content ourselves with a few criticisms and illustrations of the thirty-one syllable stanzas, so well known to every student of Japanese literature under the name of "Shorter Odes," and which have not only, from the 9th century downwards, been by far the most popular form of poetical composition, both with writers and readers among the natives themselves, but are also, in the opinion of those outsiders best qualified to pronounce on such a subject, the most characteristic of all the productions of the Japanese muse.

A poem complete in thirty-one syllables! Strangely as such an idea may strike a European, the notion of an epic in a dozen cantos would seem to these Easterns to the full as strange, and vastly more appalling; for in no other quarter of the globe does the doctrine that "brevity is the soul of wit" find so many votaries. A prosody which knows nothing of either rhyme or assonance, alliteration, parallelism, quantity or accentual stress, may likewise appear a contradiction in terms. What then, in Japan, constitutes the difference between prose and verse, if all these distinguishing marks be missing? Well; in order that a composition may be rhythmical, the words of which it is composed must be so arranged as to fall into lines of either five or seven syllables, which lines must succeed one another in a certain order; and that order, in the thirty-one syllable odes, is 5, 7, 5, 7, 7. Also many inversions unknown in prose are permitted; plays upon words and a peculiar kind of terms called "pillow-words," are introduced for the sake of grace and euphony, and, above all, no barbarous Chinese expression must ever cross the poetic threshold. So much for the outer form, touching which, indeed, if all its minutiae were to be noticed, a sufficiently long treatise might be written by any Japanese scholar who did not pause to ask himself whether it would be ever read. What will be of wider interest is the contents of these miniature poems.

The contents are various, it need scarcely be said; for the ponderous tomes of the *Collection of a Myriad Leaves*, of the many-titled collections sometimes classed together as the *Poetical Collections of the Twenty-one Reigns*, and of all the other collections and selections which still continue to grow year by year, even under the government of his present gracious Majesty, when so much else that had appeared to be ineradicably fixed in the national affection is seen scattered to the winds and become "as a dream when one awaketh"—all these hundreds and hundreds of volumes of thirty-one syllable odes cannot but treat of a multiplicity of subjects. In most of the collections, indeed, the poems are regularly classified under various heads: first Spring, wherein the odes on the different flowers of that delightful season succeed each other

* For a specimen of the latter see the CORNHILL MAGAZINE for October, 1876.

in the order in which such flowers bloom—first the plum-blossom, and then the cherry, the most precious of all flowers; after that, in early summer, the wisteria, accompanied by the cuckoo, which, on the first day of the fourth moon, takes the place left vacant by the nightingale on the preceding evening (the last evening of spring); and so on, down to the end of winter. Next comes incipient love, followed by all the other phases of the tender passion—and a large and important division this is—while elegies, travelling odes, acrostics, and odes congratulatory and miscellaneous bring up the rear. Such is, in brief, the order followed in the *Collection of Odes Ancient and Modern*, published A.D. 905, by command of the Mikado Daigo, and from which, as the most celebrated of the *Poetical Collections of the Twenty-one Reigns*, the majority of our illustrations will be drawn.

Of all the excellencies of the ancient Japanese poets, none can have a greater charm for the modern English reader than their passionate love of nature, and their tender interpretation of her mysteries—qualities which are inherited by their otherwise strictly practical descendants at the present day. Take, for instance, the following stanza:—

Softly the dew upon my forehead light:—
From off the oars, perchance, as feather'd spray,
They fall, while some fair junk bends on her way
Across the Heav'nly Stream on starlit night.

The "Heavenly Stream" is the Japanese name for that which we call the Milky Way.

Or, again, listen to the following,—one of the odes on the snow:—

When from the skies that wintry gloom enshrouds
The blossoms fall and flutter round my head,
Methinks the spring e'en now his light must shed
O'er heav'nly lands that lie beyond the clouds.

The flowers to which the snow is here compared are those of the splendid double cherry-tree, the king of trees, whose praises these far Eastern bards are never tired of singing. One of the most celebrated of them, Narihira, even goes so far, by an extreme of rapture, as almost to curse these too lovely flowers. He exclaims:—

If earth but ceased to offer to my sight
The beauteous cherry-trees when flowering,
Ah! then, indeed, with peaceful, pure delight
Mine heart might revel in the joys of spring!

Rather far-fetched, perhaps. But then we should remember that to one nation alone, in all the annals of literature, was it given to know exactly the limits of true taste; and that if the Japanese sometimes sin against Greek ideas of moderation, we later Europeans could scarcely venture to throw at them the first stone. Possibly, too, a tendency to exaggeration was, in Narihira's case, but a family failing. At least, we find a half-brother of his—also a grandee of the then Mikado's court—

giving vent to very ridiculous sentiments at the aspect of a celebrated cascade. He says :

The roaring torrent scatters far and near
Its silv'ry drops. Oh! let me pick them up.
For when of grief I drain some day the cup,
Each will do service as a bitter tear!

From this to avowed caricature is but a step; and the poet Tadaminié is himself laughing when he writes of another waterfall :

Long years, methinks, of sorrow and of care
Must have pass'd over the old fountain-head
Of the cascade; for like a silv'ry thread
It rolls adown, nor shows one jet-black hair!

It would be impossible to accuse the Japanese of want of imagination when we find them capable of so bold an idea as is contained in the following "miniature ode" on the wild geese :

What junk, impell'd by autumn's fresh'ning gale,
Comes speeding t'ward me? 'Tis the wild geese driv'n
Across the fathomless expanse of heav'n,
And lifting up their voices for a sail.

Yet it is certain that some of the most powerful aids to imagination are wanting among them; and of one of these aids in particular, the use of impersonation—which to us Europeans is naturally suggested by the genders of nouns either in our own or in kindred and well-known tongues—the Japanese are almost entirely deprived by the very different nature of their language, which does not so much as possess words answering to our "he" and "she" to distinguish a man from a woman. Death with his sickle, or Flora leading back the May, would appear to these simple-minded Orientals as queer and far-fetched a notion as would that of stationing upon bridges, and in other public places, big statues of scantily-dressed females supposed to represent Commerce and Agriculture, or Philosophy and Religion, or some such other abstract ideas. It would probably be hard to get them at all to understand what was meant, and when they did at last understand, they would most assuredly burst out laughing. Indeed, in the whole course of his Japanese reading, the present writer does not remember to have met with more than one clear instance of impersonation. It occurs in a stanza on Old Age, which, though seemingly intended to be joking, may perhaps be thought to have in it a certain touch of pathos :

Old Age is not a friend I wish to meet;
And if some day to see me he should come,
I'd lock the door as he walk'd up the street,
And cry: "Most honour'd Sir, I'm not at home!"

To conclude, from the last few stanzas quoted, that the poets of Japan are much given to the comic, were to conclude wrongly. They are almost always serious,—too monstrously serious, perhaps, for European taste; and as for the commentators, *they* are hopelessly serious, insisting on dis-

covering allusions where there are none, and meanings that were never meant. We read, for example, the following stanza :

With roseate hues that pierce the autumnal haze,
The spreading dawn lights up Akashi's shore!
But the fair ship, alas! is seen no more,
An island veils it from my loving gaze;

and, as we read, the explanation that suggests itself to our untutored minds is, that the tiny ode means just what it says, and that the poet, apparently putting the words into the mouth of some high-born damsel of the Mikado's court, simply intends to represent her as watching with tender eyes the departing junk that bears her lover from her side. But no! the writings of so celebrated and so ancient a person as the author of the ode are not to be treated in this off-hand manner. All kinds of mystical interpretations are suggested: as that, for instance, the reference is to the frank innocence of childhood, which all too soon disappears behind the rocky islands and makes shipwreck on the sands of life. Of one commentator it is reported that he pondered constantly on this stanza during the space of three years, and was at last rewarded by an insight into its secret intention. Unfortunately the outcome of his meditations has not been handed down to us.

But the elegy is, of all the forms of poetry, that in which the Japanese may most truly be said to excel, even when—by an usage which would jar on European taste, but which, in their so differently constituted language, is extremely graceful and even pathetic—they introduce plays upon words into the midst of the most serious thoughts. The poet Tsurayuki thus laments the death of a friend, who, like himself, belonged to that bright galaxy that shone in the court of Kiyoto at a time when almost all Europe was sunk in dark and hopeless barbarism:

So frail our life, perchance to-morrow's sun
May never rise for me. Ah! well-a-day!
While lasts the twilight of the sad to-day,
I'll mourn for thee, O thou beloved one!

A point which should never be forgotten is, that almost all the classical literature of Japan was written by and for a small circle of lords and ladies, princes and princesses, at the Imperial court. For if, without entering into speculations on the reason of so strange a phenomenon—less strange to one who should adopt the theory of an original distinction of race between the nobles and the plebeians of Japan—if we keep this fact in mind, we shall have a key to the interpretation of most of the characteristics of a highly peculiar literature. Where, indeed, if not in the ante-chambers of a court, should verbal harmony and all the softer graces of style be pursued to a degree showing that manner more than matter is held to be the one thing needful to poet and prosaist alike? Under what other circumstances should we be more likely to find piquancy take the place of profundity, and sentiment the place of passion? For the high-born poets who passed from one viceroyalty to another, and for

the poetesses who, in damask and brocade, spent their days amid the magnificence of the palace of the "Son of Heaven," few circumstances could arise which might have made them able to fathom the depths of the human heart or have brought them face to face with those moral problems that must suggest themselves to such as, conscious of right-doing in themselves, yet have to fight an unequal battle with all the evil powers of the world. The, in Japan, all but preponderating influence of women was also thrown into the scale; at least it may, we trust (even in our days, when this has become rather a delicate subject), be permitted us to hold that female writers are more likely to abound in subtle graces than in vigour and in philosophic depth.

Here are a few more miscellaneous examples of "miniature odes:"

REPROACH ADDRESSED TO THE NIGHTINGALES.

Whom would your cries, with artful calumny,
Accuse of scatt'ring the pale cherry-flow'rs?
'Tis your own pinions flitting through these bow'rs
That raise the gust which makes them fall and die!

UNREQUITED LOVE.

A youth once loved me, and his love I spurned.
But see the vengeance of the pow'rs above
On cold indiff'rence: now 'tis I that love,
And my young love, alas! is not return'd.

LOVE.

Now hid from sight are great Mount Fusi's fires.
Mount Fusi, said I? 'Tis myself I mean!
For the word *Fusi* signifies, I ween,
Few see the constant flame of my desires.*

THE LOTUS.

O lotus-leaf! I dreamt that the wide earth
Held nought more pure than thou, held nought more true.
Why, then, when on thee rolls a drop of dew,
Pretend that 'tis a gem of priceless worth?

Of the Buddhist bishop Henjō, writer of the above stanza, the justly celebrated author of the preface to the *Collection of Odes Ancient and Modern*, says: "The bishop was a skilful versifier, but in real feeling he was lacking: I might liken him to one that should conceive an artificial passion for the mere painted semblance of a maiden." Of the already quoted poet Narihira, it is said in the same place: "His stanzas are so pregnant with meaning, that the words suffice not to express it. He is like a closed flower that hath lost her colour, but whose fragrance yet remaineth." Here is another sample of his obscure style:—

E'en when on earth the thundering gods held sway
Was such a sight beheld? Calm Tats'ta's flood,
Stain'd, as by China's art, with hues of blood,
Rolls o'er the peaceful moors and fields away.

The allusion is to the crimson and scarlet of the autumn maples.

* This stanza is necessarily rather an imitation of the original than a translation of it.

But we must not go on quoting for ever—if, indeed, quoting it can be called, where, in the place of the originals which the translator so much delights in reading, those he writes for are reduced to reading the translator. A few words in conclusion. If a moral, a lesson must perhaps be drawn from the works of the classic poets of Japan, it might, perhaps, be formulated in three simple words: "Life is brief." Life is brief. Let us make the best of it; for we know not what comes after, nor if anything comes after. Let us pluck the flowers of spring before they fade; let us hark to the note of the cuckoo, as, in the reddening summer dawn, his shadow flits for an instant across the face of the sinking moon; let us love; let us be merry—not wildly or grossly, like the fool of Scripture, but with all comeliness and grace, as befits high-born and cultivated men and maidens. From those that are dominated by such an ever-present idea—albeit that it is less often proclaimed than understood—sadness cannot long be absent: hence the power of their elegies, and the tender grace of their conception of nature. For, be it observed, in ages of faith natural beauties are but little understood or appreciated. How, indeed, can they be greatly valued by men who look upon them as snares and hindrances, turning away the soul from the contemplation of higher and worthier objects? and the remark that it is only in these latter days of lukewarm conviction that we Europeans have really begun to enter into the meaning of outward nature is a trite one. Love nature, love life and enjoy it, would seem to be the burden of the songs of the poets of Japan; but yet they never can forget how soon the life to which they so greatly hold will end, how soon the natural beauties they so dearly prize will—for each one, at least—pass hopelessly away. One of the poets of the eighth century has expressed this in a more direct, as well as in a more graceful manner than any of his compeers. Writing, as he did, just before the time when the "shorter odes" of which we have been treating became almost the sole recognised form of poetical composition, his poem, which is a much longer one, does not strictly belong to the subject of this paper. But it so exactly reproduces that idea which may be called the fundamental idea of Japanese poetry, that we think our readers will not quarrel with us for quoting it. There is a short prose superscription which runs thus:—

Easy to accumulate and hard to avoid are the eight greater tribulations. Hard to obtain and easy to exhaust are the joys of an hundred years. What the ancients deplored, I too have now reason to lament, and have therefore composed this ode to give vent to my grief at the turning grey of my hairs:—

ODE ON THE UNSATISFACTORINESS OF LIFE.

Proem.

'Twere idle to complain,
Or think to stem unvarying nature's course,
And backward to its source

Turn the swift torrent of the years again,
That, with resistless force,
Rolls down with age and sorrow in its train.

Strophe.

Lo! where the virgin choirs are playing,
As tender virgins may best,
When, hand in hand, they go a-maying,
And through the merry dance they flit :
 Bracelets of gems and gold
 Around their arms are roll'd ;
And, lightly, sleeve in sleeve entwined,
What time the tender virgins go a-maying,
Their crimson robes all carelessly are swaying
 As breathes the listless wind.
But eager time cannot be staying :
 Their beauty loses its delight ;
Already through their locks come straying
 Pale threads of silv'ry white ;
Already do the wrinkles furrow
 The features erst so blithe and gay,
And fades the smile which seem'd to borrow
 The sweetness of the flowers of May :
Such is, alas! dread time's inevitable sway !

Antistrophe.

Behold the martial youth advancing,
As martial youth may well beseem,
In coat of mail, with sabre glancing,
And arrows that as hoar-frost gleam !
 There, on the grassy mead,
 Over his chestnut steed
He flings a cloth of leopard-hide,
And to the castle hies him gaily prancing,
Where dwells a lovely maiden soul-entrancing,—
 His own, his own sweet bride ;
Then gently knocks, and, round him glancing,
 Throws back the door, and clasps her tight
And she, too, clasps his hands, enhancing
 The rapture of that night.
Vain fleeting dream ! With none to guide him,
 See him now leaning on his staff,
His sole support, where all avoid him
 Or greet him with a scornful laugh :
Such is the old man's end—a butt for idle scoff !

Epode.

Cease, then, to wish ; cease to complain :
What's past is past, and comes not back again.

BASIL HALL CHAMBERLAIN.

An Apology for Idlers.

BOSWELL: We grow weary when idle.

JOHNSON: That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were idle, there would be no growing weary; we should all entertain one another.

JUST NOW, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *l'ase-respectability*, to enter on some lucrative profession, and labour therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savours a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognised in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and, in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them. And while such an one is ploughing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment, when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for these tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have laboured along and scaled the arduous hill-tops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favour of diligence; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written

a book of travels in Montenegro, is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay may escape from school honours with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterwards have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamour of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thought. If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truancy that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-lustre periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphytepsis is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favourite school of Dickens and Balzac, and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this: if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is it? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such an one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue:—

"How now, young fellow, what dost thou here?"

"Truly, sir, I take mine ease."

"Is not this the hour of the class? and should'st thou not be plying thy Book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge?"

"Nay, but thus also I follow after Learning, by your leave."

"Learning, quotha! After what fashion, I pray thee? Is it mathematics?"

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics?"

"Nor that."

"Is it some language?"

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade?"

"Nor a trade neither."

"Why, then, what is't?"

"Indeed, sir, as a time may soon come for me to go upon Pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest Sloughs and Thickets on the Road; as also, what manner of Staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call Peace, or Contentment."

Hereupon Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise: "Learning, quotha!" said he; "I would have all such rogues scourged by the Hangman!"

And so he would go his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now this, of Mr. Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by; or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve, as he grew older, came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx., which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix., which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently," and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanour, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of

life. Many make a large fortune, who remain underbred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere of Commonsense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the Sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of Eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness; but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many firelit parlours; good people laughing, drinking, and making love, as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness*, whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless Necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look

at and no one to speak with ; you would imagine they were paralysed or alienated ; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal ; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play ; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another, while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes ; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls ; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuff-box empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business, is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the Theatre of Life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that Theatre, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection ; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company ? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money ; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts ; and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr. Barnes. And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbas's whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends ; for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favour has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half-an-hour pleasantly,

perhaps profitably, over an article of his ; do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil ? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity ? Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest. There must always be two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest ; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favour is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set everyone he passed into a good humour ; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with this remark : " You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children ; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage ; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good will ; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition ; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great Theorem of the Liveableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept ; but, thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused, and, within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion ; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot ; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office, than they can tolerate his fractious spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about ? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives ? That a man should

publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves, the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his book; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare! And yet you see merchants who go and labour themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court; scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid; and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centrepoint of all the universe? And yet it is not so. The ends for which they give away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought.

R. L. S.

At a time of the year
When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
And the shining Daffodil dies and the Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the west,

... Seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the blest
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars—
... and pointed to Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

The ruddy hue of this planet, justifying the evil qualities attributed to it by nations believing in planetary influences, has been noted from the earliest times. The Greeks called Mars the fiery planet; the Hebrews gave it a name signifying "enkindled," the Indians called it Angaraka, or burning charcoal, and sometimes Lohitanga, or the red orb. Ruddy stars also were compared with Mars, as the chief of all the ruddy stars,—so that the name Antares given to the star which glows like a fiery coal in the heart of the Scorpion, signifies that in ruddiness that star is a rival of Mars or Ares.

Recent researches among the ruins of Nineveh have brought to light cuneiform inscriptions relating to the celestial bodies, and among others to the planet Mars. It would appear that a treatise, in sixty books,

called *The Observations of Bel*, belonged formerly to the public library of Nineveh. Its date cannot have been later than the seventeenth century before our era, and the observations recorded in it extend over more than 500 years, so that the earliest bore date about 2540 B.C. One of the books was devoted to the pole star,—not our present pole star, but the star Alpha of the Dragon, at that time the bright star which lay nearest the pole of the heavens. Another book was devoted to Venus; a third to Mars. We find that even at the remotest time to which these records relate, that is, more than 2500 years before our era, the planet Mars presided (as a deity) over the third day of the week, the other planets ruling the days in the order indicated by the present nomenclature, the Sun presiding over Sunday, the Moon over Monday (Mars over Tuesday, or Mardi), Mercury over Wednesday (or Mercredi), Jupiter over Thursday (or Jeudi, Jove's day), Venus over Friday (or Vendredi), and Saturn, the gloomiest and most malignant, but also the most powerful of the planetary deities, over Saturday, the sabbath day, when, owing to his evil influence, no work could safely be undertaken. Doubtless Tuesday was as rigidly set aside for the initiation of all warlike enterprises as Saturday for the avoidance of all labour whatsoever.

If only astrology had been a true method of prediction, the discovery of the true nature of the solar system would have brought within our range much fuller information respecting the other planets, and in particular the planet Mars, than we are ever likely to possess. Astrologers claimed such perfection for the principles of their art, that the whole history of our earth might have been predicted from the planetary configurations alone; and indeed they were very successful in showing that all past events corresponded with the aspect of the heavens when they occurred. Now if other planets thus influence the fortunes of our earth, which is itself one of the planets, it follows that each of the planets is in like manner influenced by the positions and motions of the rest. But these can be quite easily calculated. Therefore the fortunes of the inhabitants of every planet can be determined, and the entire past history of each planet can be read by terrestrial astronomers. Only one circumstance must be ascertained telescopically. (At least so it appears to us, for we confess we are not such adepts in the methods of astrological divination as to be quite sure whether astrological principles, properly applied, might not have determined everything which the telescope has revealed. As a mere matter of fact astrology discovered nothing of this kind. But that is the merest detail.) It should be known how a planet is posed in space, what are the pole stars of its northern and southern hemispheres, and at what rate exactly it rotates upon its axis. For the astrologer, in determining the future fortunes of his "native," or in calculating the native's past history, has to take into account the aspect of the star-sphere at the moment of the native's birth, as well as at the critical stages of his career; and to do this properly account must be taken of course of the hour and of the position of the pole of the heavens,

We do, however, know fairly well the position of the axis of Mars, and we know the length of his day within the tenth part of a second, so that if only astrology were a sound method of divination, we might learn much of the past history and of the future fortunes of this planet. As De Morgan has remarked in an article on astrology in the *Penny Cyclopædia*, "we have lost," in the rejection of astrology, "a charming opportunity of discovering what goes on in other planets."

The astronomer who watches, during the approaching close approach of Mars, the slowly rotating lands and seas of the planet, can scarcely, however unimaginative he may be (and we fear it is an essential requisite of the surveying astronomer that he should be as free from imagination as a man well can be), avoid the thought that contests such as have raged upon our earth for the possession of various regions of our planet's surface, may be in progress out yonder in space. Armies may be desolating the fairest regions of Mars at the very time when they are under the telescopic survey of the terrestrial observer. Warlike fleets may be urging their way across those seas and straits which our astronomers have marked down in their charts of the planet. We may hope, if we choose to forget our own experience of "Nature red in tooth and claw with ravine," that in yonder peaceful looking world there is peace among all creatures. But our own earth, amid the fiercest tumults and the most desolating wars, presents to the other worlds that people space the same peaceful scene. Distance lends so much, at least, of enchantment to the view. The sun himself, over every square mile of whose surface turmoil and uproar prevail compared with which the crash of the thunderbolt is as silence and the fiercest blast of the hurricane as absolute rest, looks calm and still in our skies, and even in the telescope shows signs of activity only to the mind's eye, none that our natural vision can appreciate.

It is a strange thought, too, that expeditions such as man makes to discover the hidden places of the earth may be in progress in other planets. Some among those lands and seas of Mars, which the astronomer contemplates in the ease and quiet of his observatory, may not as yet have been seen by inhabitants of Mars, because of the dangers which prevent access to them. We may well doubt, for instance, whether the bravest and most enterprising Martialists have yet succeeded in reaching either pole of the planet. Our eyes have rested on those polar regions, even on the very poles themselves, of the planet. But so, an observer on Venus, possessing optical instruments of adequate power, could see, on turning them upon our earth, those terrestrial polar regions which the most daring of our voyagers have in vain attempted to reach. And as the eyes of creatures in other worlds may thus have looked upon regions of the earth of which we know nothing from direct observation, so the eye of man has rested on the poles of a planet which is never at a less distance than 33,000,000 miles, while the inhabitants of that planet, if such there are, may have been foiled again and again in all attempts to penetrate within their polar fastnesses.

We wonder, in passing, whether the idea has ever occurred to the inhabitants of Mars that Martian regions have been made the subject of a war, and a somewhat lively war, though of words only, among terrestrial astronomers. Such has actually been the case, inasmuch that if analogy may be our guide, astronomers in Mars and Venus are not improbably contending about the distribution of the four quarters of our earth, and our principal seas, and lakes, and islands, and peninsulas, among living and dead celebrities in those planets. The story of a recent short but sharp terrestrial war over the lands and seas of Mars is not without its lesson, even if that lesson be only a response to the time-worn question, "*Tantene animis cœlestibus iræ!*" It would seem that an English student of astronomy who had found occasion often to refer to Martian regions until then unnamed, had for convenience assigned to these regions, after charting them (a work of some labour and difficulty), the names of those astronomers whose observations had thrown light upon the geography of the planet,—or its areography, as, if pedantically inclined, we may name what corresponds with the geography of our earth. Thus to Sir W. Herschel one continent was assigned, to Secchi another, to Mädler a third, and to Dawes (the "eagle-eyed" observer to whom we owe the most exact observations of Mars yet made) a fourth. To divers other astronomers, all observers of the planet, various lands and seas were assigned. This was not done with the idea of honouring those astronomers, but simply of giving convenient names to features which have often to be referred to. A Belgian astronomer, Dr. Terby, of Louvain, who has laboriously examined and compared an immense number of pictures of Mars, adopted the nomenclature just referred to, adding one or two names (including that of the author of the English chart), but making no changes. Unfortunately, however, he had somewhat misapprehended the object of the names, and described them as "in honour of" such a one's labours, "in recognition of" the discoveries of such another, and so forth. This proved too much for the patience of a French writer on astronomy, who found neither continent nor ocean (as it chanced) assigned to any French observer, though large tracts of land and sea were given to Laplace, Leverrier, Arago, and other distinguished Frenchmen. He therefore incontinently reconstructed the chart, altering it in many respects (all the alterations singularly enough corresponding more or less closely with Dr. Terby's suggestions as to what might have to be done when Mars was re-examined). He called this chart his own, and proceeded to re-name most of the lands and seas. He treated some English observers rather contemptuously, dismissing Sir J. Herschel altogether, relegating Dawes to a small sea, De la Rue to another, Lockyer to a third (all three seas close together). The most marked feature of all, a dark sea, shaped somewhat like an hour-glass, had been assigned to Kaiser, a German astronomer, who had made many interesting observations of the planet. M. Flammarion dismisses the German to a corner of that sea, and leaves the sea itself with-

out any name except one descriptive of its shape,—possibly intending that the name of a French writer on astronomy should fill the space.

On this Dr. Terby of Louvain rose indignant. In astronomic ire and areographic grief, he solemnly denounced the new nomenclature. To say truth, he had some reason to be annoyed, because his labours had been freely used with a form of acknowledgment which, though seemingly profuse, by no means did justice to his claims. "Nine times," said M. Flammarion, "does the name of Dr. Terby appear in my account of the lands and seas of Mars." "I would you had mentioned it once only," retorts Dr. Terby, "with the statement that the account is entirely taken from my labours," where it is not borrowed from the before-mentioned English astronomers. M. Flammarion promises, in return, never to mention Dr. Terby again. "*Mea culpa*: je ne le ferai plus," he says, adding, as a pleasant parting word, "à tout bien prendre cependant, il n'y a rien d'étonnant à ce qu'on se bataille à propos de Mars; espérons qu'il n'y aura pas de sang versé, et que la colère du petit lion Belge se calmera d'elle-même."

Let us turn, however, from these small bickerings to the consideration of the planet itself. Already in these pages* we have discussed two theories of the planet Mars regarded as another world. One is the theory that he is at present inhabited, and that too by creatures which, though they may differ very much from the inhabitants of this earth in shape and appearance, may yet be as high in the scale of living creatures. In particular this theory assumes as probable, if not certain, the belief that among the inhabitants of Mars there are creatures endowed with reason. According to the other theory, which we have called the Whewellite theory, Mars is altogether unfit to be the abode of creatures resembling those which inhabit our earth; neither vegetable nor animal forms known to us could exist on the planet; in fine, "all the conditions of life in Mars, all that tends to the comfort and well-being of Martian creatures, must differ utterly from what is human on earth." We have also in our essay on "Life past and future in other Worlds" (in the CORNHILL MAGAZINE for June, 1875) considered a general theory which in our opinion is far more probable than either the Brewsterian or the Whewellite,—the theory, namely, that each planet has a life-bearing stage, but that the duration of this stage of its existence, though measurable perhaps by hundreds of millions of years, is yet exceedingly short by comparison with the duration of the preceding stage of preparation and the sequent stage of decay and death. From the direct application of the laws of probability to this theory, the chances are shown to be very small indeed that life exists at this present time on any planet selected at random and without reference to what observation has revealed. Precisely as, when we know that a bag contains several thousand black balls and only

* See CORNHILL MAGAZINE for May, 1871, "Life in Mars;" and for July 1873, "A Whewellite Essay on Mars."

a few white ones, the chance that a ball taken at random is a white one is exceedingly small; so, the period of a planet's fitness for life being short compared with the preceding and following stages, the chances are very small that this present time, which is, so far as other planets are concerned, taken at random, falls within the period of any given planet's fitness to be the abode of living creatures. The telescope and the spectro-scope may correct this inference, just as on looking at a ball taken from such a bag as we have described the drawer of the ball might find to his surprise that he had taken one of the white ones, few though they were compared with the black ones. But *apart* from such observations, the chances must be regarded as exceedingly small (according to this theory) that any given planet is at this present time inhabited. Nevertheless, two conclusions, according well with ordinary conceptions as to the fitness of things, follow from this theory:—First, our earth is but one among many millions of worlds inhabited at this present time. Secondly, every planet is at some time or other, and for a very long period, the abode of life. These three points,—the small probability (apart from telescopic observation) that any given planet is inhabited now; the great probability that many millions (out of thousands of millions of planets) are inhabited now; and the equally great probability that every planet has been, is, or will be inhabited—are demonstrated in the third of the essays above mentioned. That essay presents the view towards which the present writer had been gradually led—from the Brewsterian theory which he accepted until 1871, through the Whewellite, towards which he had inclined until 1873, when finally the intermediate theory seemed pressed upon him by overwhelming weight of testimony.

Our present purpose is to show more particularly how this theory accords with what is known respecting the planet Mars. We wish also to show how both the lines of reasoning which had been before employed, one pointing to the Brewsterian theory, the other to the Whewellite theory, converge in the case of Mars upon this intermediate theory.

In the first place, we saw, in considering the conditions which favour belief in the existence of life in the planet Mars, that he presents the clearest possible evidence of being one in origin and structure with our own earth. We cannot tell what the nature of the soil of Mars may be, but its generally ruddy tinge,—so well marked that, though the telescope shows an almost equal part of the surface to be greenish in hue, the red prevails, giving to the planet as seen by the naked eye its obvious red colour,—seems to show that it resembles the red sandstone of our own earth. This, we know, is one of the older geological formations, and if we could safely compare terrestrial with Martian geology, or, let us say, geology with areology, we might almost be tempted to find in the present prevalence of a tint belonging to one of the earlier of our terrestrial formations an argument in favour of the theory that Mars passed through fewer stages of development during its life-bearing condition than our earth, and that thus the later formations of our earth's surface are want-

ing in the surface of Mars. This reasoning would not be very safe, however; it implies a resemblance in details which is unlikely, the observed rule of nature seeming, so far as we can judge, to be similarity in generals, variety in details. We may well believe that the ruddiness of the soil of Mars is due to the same general cause as the ruddiness of our red sandstone,—the general prevalence of certain organisms; but neither the actual character of this particular formation, nor its position in the terrestrial series of strata, can be safely predicated of the ruddy formation constituting the chief part of the visible land surface of Mars. Few will now suppose with a French writer, that the ruddiness of Mars is due to the colour of vegetation there. A certain support is given to the idea by the circumstance that the degree of ruddiness is variable, and is somewhat greater during the Martian summer than in spring and autumn. In this sense, we may say of the summer of Mars with the poet Wendell Holmes—

The snows that glittered on the disc of Mars
Have melted, and the planet's fiery orb
Rolls in the crimson summer of its year.

But the ruddiness of the planet's summer—which will be well marked this year, for on September 18, only eleven days after its time of nearest approach and greatest splendour, it will be Midsummer's day for the southern half of Mars—can be otherwise and better explained than by supposing that the Martian forests glow with fiery foliage during the summer days. We can see, as the summer proceeds, the white mists which had hidden the planet's lands and seas breaking up, and the features of the surface being gradually revealed with more and more distinctness. It is to the disappearance of these mists and clouds, not to the red leaves of Martian trees, that the change in the planet's colour must most probably be referred.

We have less reason for doubt as to the nature of the greenish markings. The spectroscope, as we have already explained in *Life in Mars*, shows that the air of Mars is at times laden heavily with the vapour of water. We can no longer therefore follow Whewell in doubting the real nature of the green parts of the planet, or refuse with him to accept the explanation of the white polar markings long since advanced by Sir W. Herschel. Undoubtedly wide seas and oceans, with many straits and bays and inland seas, exist on Mars. Snow and ice gather in the winter time about his polar regions, diminishing gradually in extent as summer proceeds, but never entirely disappearing.

Thus we are not left doubtful as to the general resemblance of Mars, so far as the structure of his surface is concerned, to the earth on which we live. He has a surface of earth, probably in large part formed by deposition at the bottom of former seas and subsequently raised above the sea level by subterranean forces, or rather caused to appear above the surface by the effects of the gradual shrinkage of the planet's crust. Of the existence of volcanic energy we have unmistakable evidence in

the fact that lands and seas exist, for a continent implies the operation of Vulcanian forces. The shapes, too, of the outlines of the lands and seas indicate the existence of mountain ranges, and these, too, of considerable elevation. Then we have the presence of water, and of a stable atmosphere in which the vapour of water rises. It seems no daring assumption to suppose that this air is constituted much like our own air. In the first place, if the air were formed of other gases, the spectroscope would probably reveal their existence, which has not happened; and secondly, with the evidence we have of a general similarity of structure and origin, an atmosphere of nitrogen and oxygen would naturally be formed while the planet was developing to its present condition, and would remain after other constituents of the planet's primeval atmosphere had been removed. For a similar reason we may safely infer that the greenish hue of the water implies the presence of the same substances, though not perhaps similarly proportioned, which are carried in suspension in our oceans, and give to them their green, green-blue, and blue tints.

It is important to notice these general resemblances, either demonstrated or safely to be inferred. We no longer propose to deduce from them the conclusion that the planet's present condition is like that of our own earth. We might, indeed, dwell on some considerations which naturally suggest themselves here. We might see in imagination the waves of those distant seas beating upon the long shore lines, and hear "the scream of a maddened beach dragged down by the wave." We can imagine the slow progress of the Martian day,—the mists of morning gradually clearing away as the sun rises; the winds raised by the mid-day heat, zephyrs murmuring among the distant hills or blasts roaring loudly over desolate rock-bound seas; the gathering of clouds towards eventide, though probably to pass from the skies at night (because condensed by cold), leaving the same constellations we see to shine with greater splendour through a rarer atmosphere. We can imagine all this, because we know from what the telescope has revealed that such must be the changes of the Martian day. We see in the telescope the long white shore-lines, the clearing mists of morning, the gathering mists of night,—and we know that there must be air currents in an atmosphere undergoing such changes. There must be rain and snow and hail, and electrical disturbances—thunder and lightning at times—besides tornadoes and hurricanes, blowing probably more fiercely than our own, though their destructive effects must be less because of the greater tenuity of the Martian air.

But while we recognise in imagination the progress of such events as these, we must not forget that for countless ages in the past mighty processes of disturbance and continuous processes of steady change took place in our earth when as yet there was no life, nor that probably life will have ceased to exist on this earth millions of years before the land and sea and air will cease to be the scene of nature's active but unconscious workings. We cannot deduce from the mere fact that if living creatures

existed on Mars they would witness such and such phenomena which are familiar to the inhabitants of earth, the conclusion that such creatures do exist there. We do not assert that no such creatures exist there. Our theory of life in other worlds does not require that any given planet should be shown to be uninhabited. Nevertheless, there are so many reasons for regarding the fulness of Mars's life-bearing season as belonging to a very remote past, that it is necessary to note the insufficiency of the mere evidence of the activity of nature's unconscious forces to prove the existence of living conscious beings on the planet.

In finé, the arguments by which, in the essay on *Life in Mars*, we endeavoured to indicate the probability of the planet's being inhabited, prove only that the planet had an origin like our earth's and is similarly constituted.

On the other hand, the arguments by which, in the essay entitled *A Whewellite Theory of Mars*, we endeavoured to show that Mars is not in a condition fit to be the abode of life, tend to show that while similar to the earth in origin and structure, Mars is in a far later stage of planetary development.

One of these arguments, indeed, does not relate to the condition of the planet itself, but to its position with reference to the sun. Being much further from the sun than we are, the planet receives much less direct heat. The supply is partly dependent, however, on the planet's condition; for if the air of Mars is very rare, then apart from the diminished supply there is a more rapid cooling owing to the readier radiation of heat into space. But in any case the supply of solar heat has to be considered as one of the factors of a planet's condition, considered with reference to the question of habitability. If through its inherent heat the planet Mars was once as warm on the whole as the earth now is, that heat making up for the smaller supply of solar heat, then it seems reasonable to believe that the creatures inhabiting the planet were so far like those now existing on our earth that the same degree of heat suited their requirements. If then we find reason for believing that *now* the inherent heat of the planet is much less than that of our own earth, so that on this account the descendants of those creatures would be unable to exist unless great modifications had taken place in their requirements, which modifications seem outside any effects which could be attributed to natural selection, then the inference that therefore these races of creatures have died out is certainly strengthened, and in no small degree, by the fact that the supply of heat received from the sun is much smaller in the case of Mars than in the case of our earth. Seeing, then, that the average daily supply of light and heat on Mars (taking square mile for square mile of his surface) is less than the average daily supply on our earth in the proportion of two to five, we have here a strong argument, we will not say in favour of the belief that Mars is not now inhabited, but in favour of the belief that the duration of the life-supporting era has been, is, or will be much more rapidly

shortened than in our earth's case, by the cooling of his globe. For the life-destroying influence of the cooling is much more effectively strengthened in his case than in our earth's, by the effect of distance from the central source of light and heat.

All the other circumstances in the condition of Mars point directly to the conclusion that Mars must have long since passed his planetary prime. His orbit being outside the earth's, he was probably formed far earlier, though this is not so certain as it was held to be when Laplace's nebular theory was first advanced. It is, however, very unlikely that he began to be formed later; and as he is much smaller, he would probably be fashioned more quickly. It is still more probable, in fact very much more probable, that he cooled much more quickly than the earth. His mass is not much more than a ninth of hers, while his surface is only about one-third of hers. He had, then, originally, even if of the same temperature when first formed, only one-ninth her amount of heat to distribute, so that if he had radiated away at one-ninth of her rate, the supply would have lasted as long. Pouring it away at one-third of her rate—for the radiation taking place from the surface is proportional to the surface—he parted with it three times faster than he should have done in order to cool at the same rate as the earth. Hence he cooled three times faster than the earth, and must have attained a condition which she will not attain until three times as long an interval has elapsed from the era of her first existence, than has already elapsed. Since most geologists assign many hundreds of millions of years to the last-named period, and all agree that it must be measured by many millions of years, it follows that twice as many hundreds of millions of years must elapse if the former are right, but only twice as many millions of years if the latter are right, before our earth will be in the same condition as Mars. In reality our argument is not at all affected by the difference of opinion among geologists in this respect. For the question is of the condition of Mars, not of the number of years which may have elapsed since he was in the same condition as our earth, or of the number of years which may have to pass before our earth will be in the same condition as Mars. Whether Mars requires hundreds of millions, or millions, or only thousands of years to pass through one stage of its planetary existence, our earth requires about three times as long; and taking the entire development of Mars and the earth (assuming they began planetary existence together), Mars must be some three times as far on the way towards planetary decrepitude and death as our earth.

Only one circumstance in the discussions of geologists on the question of the time required for the development of a globe like our earth, bears very strongly on our opinion as to the existence of life on Mars. It is not altogether certain that the life-bearing era of a planet is exceedingly short compared with the era of growth and preparation, and the era of decrepitude and death. So far, indeed, as astronomical considerations are concerned, we perceive that the fashioning of a planet

must be a process requiring an enormous length of time. The slow aggregation of nebulous matter, the separation of ring from ring, the breaking up of a ring into separate nebulous masses, and the gathering of each ring of them into a single mass, must have proceeded very slowly; and few who consider all the circumstances of the case will doubt that hundreds of millions of years must have elapsed between the time when first the matter of a future planet began to have separate existence, and when at length it was all gathered together in a single mass. But what followed—the gradual contraction and cooling of that mass till it became a true planet, the gradual cooling of the planet until its surface became separable into land and water, the further cooling till life became possible, the progression of life through all its various stages till earth and sea and air had each their various races of living creatures, all these stages of the planet's existence belong to the domain of geology and biology, not to that of astronomy. Doubts have arisen respecting the duration of these eras, and as yet these doubts remain. Nor have biologists as yet determined how long life may be expected to continue upon our earth. Some see already the signs of what may be called biological decrepitude. It has been asserted that man, the highest race of living creatures which the earth has yet known, is not only the highest she will ever know, but that the race, regarded as a type of animal life, has already passed its prime, and has advanced perceptibly towards decadence.* Lower races, however, seem capable almost of indefinite multiplication—we refer, be it understood, to the multiplication of races, not of the individuals composing races. And so far as mere life is concerned, it would seem as though the earth might undergo vast changes of condition, and the sun himself lose largely in heat-emitting and light-emitting power, without the earth being depopulated, so long at least as the changes took place gradually. It may well be that life begins at so early a stage of planetary development and continues to so late a stage, that the entire duration of a planet's life-bearing era bears a much greater proportion to the entire duration of the planet than our reasoning (a few paragraphs back) implies.

But after all, the question of mere life in other worlds is not what we are interested in. Mere consciousness can scarcely be regarded as a more interesting phase of nature than unconscious activity such as we see in the vegetable world, or than the motion of inert matter, or even than the mere existence of matter. If we could be assured that Mars and Venus and Mercury are crowded with animal and vegetable life of

* One of the evidences for this discouraging conclusion, advanced by a well-known American zoologist, is the relative length of the period of old age in the individual man. In youthful races, the individual does not attain old age till very soon (relatively to the entire life) before death. The relative duration of old age grows longer and longer as the race grows older, until, in races which are about to pass away, it becomes nearly equal to half the entire interval between birth and death, soon after which the race dies out,

those lower forms which owe their inferiority to decrepitude of the type, or that on the youthful planets Jupiter and Saturn some of the monstrous forms exist which flourished on the earth when she was young—

Dragons of the prime
That tare each other in their slime,

what to us would be those teeming worlds of life? They might as well be mere inert masses circling idly round the sun, neither now nor ever in the past the abode of life, and never to become so in future ages. The story of such life would be to us as—

A tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

It is the existence of intelligent beings on those remote worlds that alone has any interest for us, the thought that the wonders of the universe are recognised by beings in some sort like ourselves, that the problems which perplex us may have been dealt with, perchance even solved, by others, and again that our world may be a subject of interest and study for creatures thinking as much, but knowing as little, about us as we think and know about them.

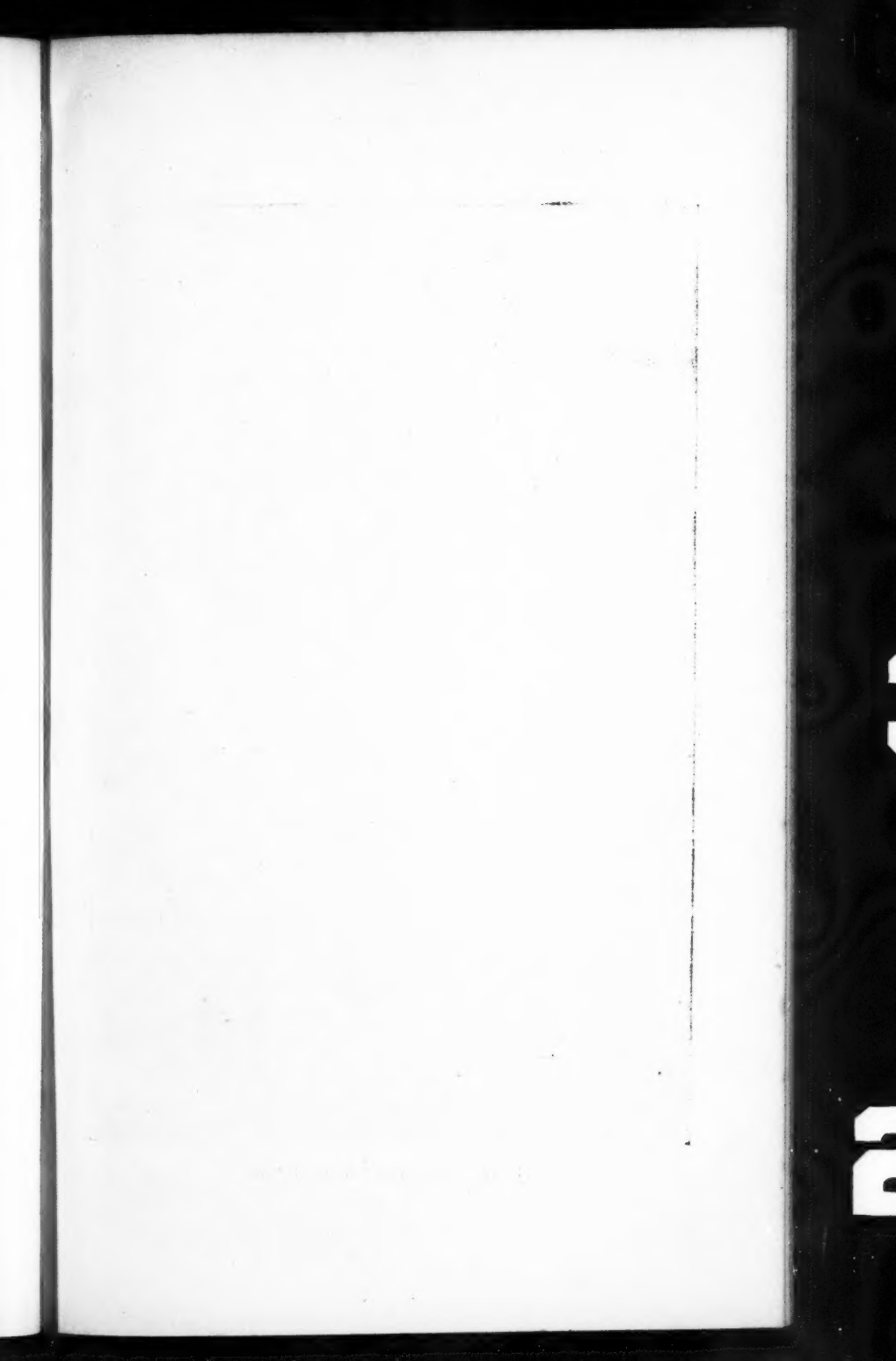
In this respect certainly, if analogy can be any guide at all, we find little reason for regarding with present interest either the younger giant planets, Jupiter and Saturn, or the probably aged dwarfs, Mercury, Mars, and our moon. Few believe that men have existed on the earth many hundreds of thousands of years, and those even who assign to the human race its greatest duration in the past, regard it in its earliest form as little better than a race of brute beings. If we supposed that men sufficiently intelligent to consider the heavens and the earth have existed in our world for one hundred thousand years, we are certainly giving the widest possible allowance of duration to intelligent man. Nor can it be denied that the existence of such a race as ours seems far more definitely limited in the future by the slowly changing condition of our earth and the life-giving sun, than that of lower types of animal existence. We would not assert that beyond all question a hundred thousand years hence the earth will no longer be a fit abode for man, who has already begun to draw very largely on the garnered stores of our globe; but we consider this view altogether probable, and that indeed a nearer limit might be assigned to the duration of the human race, by one who should carefully consider the progress and requirements of the race on the one hand, and the condition, changes of condition, and capabilities of our earth, on the other.

If we assign two hundred thousand years as the extreme duration of the period during which men capable of observing the phenomena surrounding them and of studying the problems of the universe have existed and will exist, we assign to our earth a reason-life (if we may so speak) which, compared with the full life of the earth, is but as a second compared with centuries. So far as the existence of beings capable of thought and

reflection is concerned, our theory assuredly holds. It is on *a priori* grounds utterly unlikely that any one of the orbs we can actually observe is inhabited by creatures like ourselves in those circumstances which distinguish us from the brutes and from savages.

So far as observation extends, in the case of Mars, it seems altogether unlikely that the present era of his existence corresponds with that very brief period during which reasoning creatures inhabit a planet. Supposing we have rightly taken two hundred thousand years for the duration of that period in our earth's case—and it seems far more likely that the estimate errs in excess than in defect—the duration of the corresponding period in the case of Mars would probably be about 70,000 years. Mars would probably have entered on that stage of his existence millions of years ago; but supposing for a moment that he reached it at about the same time as our earth, or, according to our estimate, a hundred thousand years ago, then the period would have been completed about 30,000 years ago. The appearance of the planet implies a much later stage, however, of planetary existence. The seas of Mars present all the appearance of exhaustion during millions of years, in the course of which their waters have nourished the surface of the planet with rain. The water thus raised from the Martian oceans has no doubt been always restored to them in large part, either falling directly on the water surface in rain, or being gathered by streams and rivulets and rivers on the land surface, to be discharged by the river mouths into the seas. But a portion has always been retained by the land, soaking slowly and steadily into the interior of the planet. This portion has doubtless been exceedingly small each year, but during the long ages which have elapsed since first the seas of Mars had separate existence, the total amount thus drained off must have been enormous. We see the effect in the relatively small area of the Martian seas. They cover barely half of the planet, while terrestrial seas occupy nearly three-fourths of the surface of our globe. They have the shape also which our seas would have, if somewhat more than two-thirds of the water were dried up. The variety of tint which they present show that but few of those seas are deep, for few of them are dark. Many are so light as to suggest the idea that a large part of the area shown in the charts as aqueous, consists in reality of land and water so broken up into small islands, lakes, straits, isthmuses, and the rest, that the telescope cannot distinguish the details. Again, the unchanging colour of the land regions implies that they are naked and sterile. Unless we adopt the theory that not only is the vegetation of Mars rubescent, but that all the principal glories of the Martian forests are ever-reds, and the Martian fields covered with herbage of unchanging ruddiness, we must accept the conclusion that the land surface is an arid desert. This evidence alone is almost strong enough to assure us that none but the lowest forms of life, animal and vegetable, exist on Mars at present. The evidence against the fitness of Mars to support the higher forms of life seems overwhelmingly strong.

But after all, why should a conclusion such as this dishearten the student of other worlds than ours? Whether it relates to a planet here and there, to Mars or Mercury or the Moon because of their decrepitude, or to Jupiter and Saturn because they are as yet too young, or whether it is extended according to the laws of probability to the universe of planets, does it not accord with what we know of our own earth? We do not mean merely that our earth as a planet was once unfit, and will one day become again unfit, to support life; but that even during the present life-supporting era of its existence we do not find all regions of the earth at all times fit to support life; nor do we find all races existing simultaneously. As various races begin, develop, and die out, as various regions are at one time sterile at another clothed with life, so among the orbs inhabiting space, now one set of races may exist and anon an entirely different set, the series of planets which during one era are the abode of life being the nascent worlds of a former, the dead worlds of a later era. A modern believer in the universality of life says: "On those worlds, as on ours, there are cities passing through all the stages of glory and of power; there also, as here, there are cities like Rome, and Paris, and London, altars and thrones, temples and palaces, wealth and misery, splendours and ruins. And perchance from the venerable ruins of an ancient capital two lovers at this moment on the planet Mars may be gazing on the traces of the grandeur and of the decay of empires, and feeling that amid all the metamorphoses of time and space, life, eternally young, pervades the universe, reigning for ever over all the worlds, and pouring forth endless youth in the golden rays of all the suns which people infinity." But the very scene which suggested these ideas should have taught another lesson. Not every region of earth is inhabited, not every inhabited region is a Rome, or an Athens, or a Paris, or a London. While some great nation or city is enjoying the fulness of its vigour, others are perishing or have long since passed away, others are as yet unknown, or but begin their existence. So may it well be, so *must* it be if analogy is our guide, so *is* it if our observations can be trusted, with other planets than this earth, with other systems than our sun's. As each orb occupies but the minutest portion of the infinity of space, so is the lifetime of each but a wavelet in the ocean of eternity. Two wavelets, or many, may run side by side upon an endless sea, and so may the lifetime of our earth synchronise with life upon another world, or many others. But for each wave that thus runs beside the wave of life on which our lot is cast, a myriad—nay, ten million million others are far removed from ours, lie even beyond the horizon bounding what we call time. The universe as we know it, the region of space to which our most powerful telescopes penetrate, is not more utterly lost in the true universe of infinity than is the range of time past, present, and to come, over which our researches extend, amid the infinities of time eternal.





IT LOOKED LIKE A VERY 'NICE POND INDEED.

Crema; or, My Father's Sin.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

NOT AT HOME.



RS. HOCKIN, however, had not the pleasure promised her by the facetious Major of seeing me "make up to my grandmamma." For although we set off at once to catch the strange woman who had roused so much curiosity, and though, as we passed the door of Bruntlands, we saw her still at her post in the valley, like Major Hockin's new letter-box, for some reason best known to herself we could not see any more of her. For, hurry as he might upon other occasions, nothing would make the

Major cut a corner of his winding "drive," when descending it with a visitor. He enjoyed every yard of its length, because it was his own at every step, and he counted his paces in an undertone, to be sure of the length, for perhaps the thousandth time. It was long enough in a straight line, one would have thought, but he was not the one who thought so; and therefore he had doubled it by judicious windings, as if for the purpose of breaking the descent.

"Three hundred and twenty-one," he said, as he came to a post, where he meant to have a lodge as soon as his wife would let him; "now the old woman stands fifty-five yards on, at a spot where I mean to have an ornamental bridge, because our fine saline element runs up there when the new moon is perigee. My dear, I am a little out of breath, which affects my sight for the moment. Doubtless that is why I do not see her."

"If I may offer an opinion," I said, "in my ignorance of all the

changes you have made, the reason why we do not see her may be that she is gone out of sight."

"Impossible!" Major Hockin cried, "simply impossible, Erema. She never moves for an hour-and-a-half. And she was not come, was she, when you came by?"

"I will not be certain," I answered; "but I think that I must have seen her if she had been there, because I was looking about particularly at all your works as we came by."

"Then she must be there still, let us tackle her."

This was easier said than done, for we found no sign of anybody at the place where she certainly had been standing less than five minutes ago. We stood at the very end and last corner of the ancient river trough, where a little seam went inland from it, as if some trifle of a brook had stolen down while it found a good river to welcome it. But now there was only a little oozy gloss from the gleam of the sun upon some lees of marshy brine left among the rushes by the last high tide.

"You see my new road and the key to my intentions?" said the Major, forgetting all about his witch, and flourishing his geological hammer, while standing thus at his "nucleus." "To understand all, you have only to stand here. You see those levelling posts, adjusted with scientific accuracy. You see all those angles, calculated with micrometric precision. You see how the curves are radiated——"

"It is very beautiful, I have no doubt; but you cannot have Uncle Sam's gift of machinery. And do you understand every bit of it yourself?"

"Erema, not a jot of it. I like to talk about it freely when I can, because I see all its beauties. But as to understanding it, my dear—you might set to, if you were an educated female, and deliver me a lecture upon my own plan. Intellect is, in such matters, a bubble. I know good bricks, good mortar, and good foundations."

"With your great ability, you must do that," I answered, very gently, being touched with his humility, and allowance of my opinion; "you will make a noble town of it. But when is the railway coming?"

"Not yet. We have first to get our Act; and a miserable-minded wretch, who owns nothing but a rabbit-warren, means to oppose it. Don't let us talk of him. It puts one out of patience when a man cannot see his own interest. But come and see our assembly-rooms, literary institute, baths, &c. &c.—that is what we are urging forward now."

"But may I not go first and look for my strange namesake? Would it be wrong of me to call upon her?"

"No harm whatever," replied my companion; "likewise no good. Call fifty times, but you will get no answer. However, it is not a very great round, and you will understand my plans more clearly. Step out, my dear, as if you had got a troop of Mexicans after you. Ah, what a fine turn for that lot now!" He was thinking of the war which had broken out, and the battle of Bull's Run.

Without any such headlong speed we soon came to the dwelling place

of the stranger, and really for once the good Major had not much overdone his description. Truly it was almost tumbling down, though massively built, and a good house long ago; and it looked the more miserable now from being placed in a hollow of the ground, whose slopes were tufted with rushes, and thistles, and ragwort. The lower windows were blocked up from within, the upper were shattered, and crumbling, and dangerous, with blocks of cracked stone jutting over them; and the last surviving chimney gave less smoke than a workman's homeward whiff of his pipe to comfort and relieve the air.

The only door that we could see was of heavy black oak, without any knocker, but I clenched my hand, having thick gloves on, and made what I thought a very creditable knock, while the Major stood by, with his blue lights up, and keenly gazed and gently smiled.

"Knock again, my dear," he said; "you don't knock half hard enough."

I knocked again with all my might, and got a bruised hand for a fortnight, but there was not even the momentary content produced by an active echo. The door was as dead as everything else.

"Now for my hammer," my companion cried; "this house, in all sound law, is my own. I will have a 'John Doe and Richard Roe,'—a fine action of ejectment. Shall I be barred out upon my own manor?"

With hot indignation he swung his hammer, but nothing came of it except more noise. Then the Major grew warm and angry.

"My charter contains the right of burning witches, or drowning them, according to their colour. The execution is specially imposed upon the bailiff of this ancient town, and he is my own pickled-pork man. His name is Hopkins, and I will have him out with his seal, and stick, and all the rest. Am I to be laughed at in this way?"

For we thought we heard a little screech of laughter from the loneliness of the deep dark place, but no other answer came, and perhaps it was only our own imagining.

"Is there no other door?—perhaps one at the back?" I asked, as the lord of the manor stamped.

"No, that has been walled up long ago. The villain has defied me from the very first. Well, we shall see. This is all very fine. You witness that they deny the owner entrance?"

"Undoubtedly I can depose to that. But we must not waste your valuable time."

"After all, the poor ruin is worthless," he went on, calming down as we retired; "it must be levelled, and that hole filled up. It is quite an eyesore to our new parade. And no doubt it belongs to me, no doubt it does. The fellow who claims it was turned out of the law. Fancy any man turned out of the law. Erema, in all your far-west experience, did you ever see a man bad enough to be turned out of the law?"

"Major Hockin, how can I tell? But I fear that their practice was very very sad—they very nearly always used to hang them."

"The best use—the best use a rogue can be put to. Some big thief has put it the opposite way, because he was afraid of his own turn. The constitution must be upheld, and, by the Lord, it shall be—at any rate, in East Bruntsea. West Bruntsea is all a small-pox warren out of my control, and a skewer in my flesh. And some of my tenants have gone across the line to snap their dirty hands at me."

Being once in this cue, Major Hockin went on, not talking to me much, but rather to himself, though expecting me now and then to say "yes;" and this I did when necessary, for his principles of action were beyond all challenge, and the only question was how he carried them out.

He took me to his rampart, which was sure to stop the sea, and at the same time to afford the finest place in all Great Britain for a view of it. Even an invalid might sit here in perfect shelter from the heaviest gale, and watch such billows as were not to be seen except upon the Major's property.

"The reason of that is quite simple," he said, "and a child may see the force of it. In no other part of the kingdom can you find so steep a beach fronting the south-west winds, which are ten to one of all other winds, without any break of sand or rock outside. Hence we have what you cannot have on a shallow shore, grand rollers: straight from the very Atlantic, Erema; you and I have seen them. You may see by the map that they all end here, with the wind in the proper quarter."

"Oh, please not to talk of such horrors," I said; "why, your ramparts would go like piecrust."

The Major smiled a superior smile, and after more talk we went home to dinner.

From something more than mere curiosity I waited at Bruntsea for a day or two, hoping to see that strange namesake of mine who had shown so much inhospitality. For she must have been at home when we made that pressing call, inasmuch as there was no other place to hide her within the needful distance of the spot where she had stood. But the longer I waited the less would she come out—to borrow the good Irishman's expression—and the Major's pillar-box, her favourite resort, was left in conspicuous solitude. And when a letter came from Sir Montague Hockin, asking leave to be at Bruntlands on the following evening, I packed up my goods with all haste and set off, not an hour too soon, for Shoxford.

But before taking leave of these kind friends, I begged them to do for me one little thing, without asking me to explain my reason, which indeed was more than I could do. I begged them, not of course to watch Sir Montague, for that they could not well do to a guest, but simply to keep their eyes open and prepared for any sign of intercourse, if such there were, between this gentleman and that strange interloper. Major Hockin stared, and his wife looked at me as if my poor mind must have gone astray, and even to myself my own thought appeared absurd. Remembering,

however, what Sir Montague had said, and other little things as well, I did not laugh as they did. But perhaps one part of my conduct was not right, though the wrong (if any) had been done before that : to wit, I had faithfully promised Mrs. Price not to say a word at Bruntlands about their visitor's low and sinful treachery towards my cousin. To give such a promise had perhaps been wrong, but still without it I should have heard nothing of matters that concerned me nearly. And now it seemed almost worse to keep than to break such a pledge, when I thought of a pious, pure-minded, and holy-hearted woman, like my dear "Aunt Mary," unwittingly brought into friendly contact with a man of the lowest nature. And as for the Major, instead of sitting down with such a man to dinner, what would he have done but drive him straightway from the door, and chase him to the utmost verge of his manor with the peak-end of his "geological hammer?"

However, away I went without a word against that contemptible and base man, towards whom—though he never had injured me—I cherished for my poor cousin's sake the implacable hatred of virtuous youth. And a wild idea had occurred to me (as many wild ideas did now in the crowd of things gathering round me) that this strange woman, concealed from the world, yet keenly watching some members of it, might be that fallen and miserable creature who had fled from a good man with a bad one, because he was more like herself,—Flittamore, Lady Castlewood. Not that she could be an "old woman" yet, but she might look old, either by disguise, or through her own wickedness; and everybody knows how suddenly those southern beauties fall off, alike in face and figure. Mrs. Price had not told me what became of her, or even whether she was dead or alive, but merely said, with a meaning look, that she was "punished" for her sin, and I had not ventured to inquire how, the subject being so distasteful.

To my great surprise and uneasiness as well, I had found at Bruntlands no letter whatever, either to the Major or myself, from Uncle Sam or any other person at the Saw-mills. There had not been time for any answer to my letter of some two months back, yet being alarmed by the Sawyer's last tidings, I longed with some terror for later news. And all the United Kingdom was now watching with tender interest the dismemberment, as it almost appeared, of the other mighty Union. Not with malice, or snug satisfaction, as the men of the North in their agony said; but certainly without any proper anguish yet, and rather as a genial and sprightly spectator, whose love of fair play perhaps kindles his applause of the spirit and skill of the weaker side. "'Tis a good fight—let them fight it out!" seemed to be the general sentiment; but in spite of some American vaunt and menace (which of late years had been galling) every true Englishman deeply would have mourned the humiliation of his kindred.

In this anxiety for news I begged that my letters might be forwarded under cover to the postmistress at Shoxford, and bearing my initials,

For now I had made up my mind to let Mrs. Busk know whatever I could tell her. I had found her a cross and well-educated woman, far above her neighbours, and determined to remain so. Gossip, that universal leveller, theoretically she despised; and she had that magnificent esteem for rank which works so beautifully in England. And now when my good nurse reasonably said, that much as she loved to be with me, her business would allow that delight no longer, and it also came home to my own mind that money would be running short again, and small hope left in this dreadful civil war of our nugget escaping pillage, (which made me shudder horribly at internal discord), I just did this—I dismissed Betsy, or rather I let her dismiss herself, which she might not have altogether meant to do, although she threatened it so often. For here she had nothing to do but live well, and protest against tricks of her own profession which she practised as necessary laws at home; and so, with much affection, for the time we parted.

Mrs. Busk was delighted at her departure; for she never had liked to be criticised so keenly while she was doing her very best. And as soon as the wheels of Betsy's fly had shown their last spoke at the corner, she told me with a smile that her mind had been made up to give us notice that very evening to seek for better lodgings. But she could not wish for a quieter, pleasanter, or more easily pleased young lady than I was without any mischief-maker; and so, on the spur of the moment, I took her into my own room, while her little girl minded the shop, and there and then I told her who I was, and what I wanted.

And now she behaved most admirably. Instead of expressing surprise, she assured me that all along she had felt there was something, and that I must be somebody. Lovely as my paintings were (which I never heard, before or since, from any impartial censor), she had known that it could not be that alone which had kept me so long in their happy valley. And now she did hope I would do her the honour to stay beneath her humble roof, though entitled to one so different. And was the fairy ring in the churchyard made of all my family?

I replied that too surely this was so, and that nothing would please me better than to find, according to my stature, room to sleep inside it, as soon as ever I should have solved the mystery of its origin. At the moment this was no exaggeration, so depressing was the sense of fighting against the unknown so long, with scarcely any one to stand by me, or avenge me if I fell. And Betsy's departure, though I tried to take it mildly, had left me with a readiness to catch my breath.

But to dwell upon sadness no more than need be (a need as sure as hunger) it was manifest now to my wondering mind that once more I had chanced upon a good, and warm, and steadfast heart. Everybody is said to be born, whether that happens by night or day, with a certain little widowed star, which has lost its previous mortal, concentrating from a billion billion of miles, or leagues, or larger measure, intense, but generally invisible radiance upon him or her; and to take for the moment

this old fable as of serious meaning, my star was to find bad facts at a glance, but no bad folk without long gaze.

CHAPTER XL.

THE MAN AT LAST.

THIS new alliance with Mrs. Busk not only refreshed my courage, but helped me forward most importantly. In truth, if it had not been for this, I never could have borne what I had to bear, and met the perils which I had to meet. For I had the confidence of feeling now that here was some one close at hand, an intelligent person, and well acquainted with the place and neighbourhood, upon whom I could rely for warning, succour, and, if the worst should come to the very worst, revenge. It is true that already I had Jacob Rigg, and perhaps the protector promised by my cousin, but the former was as ignorant as he was honest, and of the latter, as he made no sign, how could I tell anything?

Above all things, Mrs. Busk's position, as mistress of the letters, gave me very great advantage both for offence and defence. For without the smallest breach of duty or of loyal honour she could see that my letters passed direct to me or from me, as the case might be, at the same time that she was bound to observe all epistles addressed to strangers or new-comers in her district, which extended throughout the valley. And by putting my letters in the Portsmouth bag, instead of that for Winchester, I could freely correspond with any of my friends without any one seeing name or postmark in the neighbouring villages.

It is needless to say that I had long since explored, and examined with great diligence, that lonely spot where my grandfather met his terrible and mysterious fate. Not that there seemed to be any hope now, after almost nineteen years, of finding even any token of the crime committed there. Only that it was natural for me, feeling great horror of this place, to seek to know it thoroughly.

For this I had good opportunity, because the timid people of the valley, towards the close of day, would rather trudge another half-mile of the homeward road than save brave legs at the thumping cost of hearts not so courageous. For the planks were now called "Murder-bridge;" and everybody knew that the red spots on it, which could never be seen by daylight, began to gleam towards the hour of the deed, and glowed (as if they would burn the wood) when the church clock struck eleven.

This phenomenon was beyond my gifts of observation; and knowing that my poor grandfather had scarcely set foot on the bridge, if ever he set foot there at all—which at present was very doubtful—also that he had fallen backward, and only bled internally, I could not reconcile tradition (however recent) with proven truth. And sure of no disturbance

from the step of any native, here I often sat in a little bowered shelter of my own, well established up the rise, down which the path made zig-zag, and screened from that and the bridge as well by sheaf of twigs and lop of leaves. It was a little forward thicket, quite detached from the upland copse, to which perhaps it had once belonged, and crusted up from the meadow slope with sod and mould in alternate steps. And being quite the elbow of a foreland of the meadow-reach, it yielded almost a "birdseye view" of the beautiful glade and the wandering brook.

One evening, when I was sitting here, neither drawing, nor working, nor even thinking with any set purpose, but idly allowing my mind to rove, like the rivulet, without any heed, I became aware of a moving figure in the valley. At first it did not appear to me as a thing at all worth notice; it might be a very straightforward cow, or a horse, coming on like a stalking horse, keeping hindlegs strictly behind, in direct desire of water. I had often seen those sweet things that enjoy four legs walking in the line of distance as if they were no better off than we are, kindly desiring, perhaps, to make the biped spectator content with himself. And I was content to admire this cow, or horse, or whatever it might be, without any more than could be helped of that invidious feeling which has driven the human race now to establish its right to a tail, and its hope of four legs. So little, indeed, did I think of what I saw, that when among the hazel twigs, parted carelessly by my hand, a cluster of nuts hung manifest, I gathered it, and began to crack and eat, although they were scarcely ripe yet.

But while employed in this pleasant way, I happened to glance again through my leafy screen, and then I distinguished the figure in the distance as that of a man walking rapidly. He was coming down the mill-stream meadow towards the wooden bridge, carrying a fishing-rod, but clearly not intent on angling. For, instead of following the course of the stream, he was keeping quite away from it, avoiding also the foot-path, or at any rate seeming to prefer the long shadows of the trees and the tufted places. This made me look at him, and very soon I shrank into my nest and watched him.

As he came nearer any one could tell that he was no village workman, bolder than the rest, and venturesome to cross the "Murder-bridge" in his haste to be at home. The fishing-rod alone was enough to show this when it came into clearer view; for our good people, though they fished sometimes, only used rough rods of their own making, without any varnish or brass thing for the line. And the man was of different height, and walk, and dress, from any of our natives.

"Who can he be?" I whispered to myself, as my heart began to beat heavily, and then seemed almost to stop, as it answered—"this is the man who was in the churchyard." Ignoble as it was, and contemptible, and vile, and traitorous to all duty, my first thought was about my own escape; for I felt that if this man saw me there he would rush up the

hill and murder me. Within pistol-shot of the very place where my grandfather had been murdered—a lonely place, an unholy spot, and I was looking at the hand that did it.

The thought of this made me tremble so, though well aware that my death might ensue from a twig on the rustle, or a leaf upon the flutter, that my chance of making off unseen was gone ere I could seize it. For now the man was taking long strides over the worn-out planks of the bridge, disdaining the handrail, and looking upward, as if to shun sight of the footing. Advancing thus he must have had his gaze point-blank upon my lair of leafage; but, luckily for me, there was gorse upon the ridge, and bracken, and rag-thistles, so that none could spy up and through the footing of my lurking place. But, if any person could have spied me, this man was the one to do it. So carefully did he scan the distance, and inspect the foreground, as if he were resolved that no eye should be upon him while he was doing what he came to do. And he even drew forth a little double telescope, such as are called "binoculars," and fixed it on the thicket which hid me from him, and then on some other dark places.

No effort would compose or hush the heavy beating of my heart; my lips were stiffened with dread of loud breath, and all power of motion left me. For even a puff of wind might betray me, the ruffle of a spray, or the lifting of a leaf, or the random bounce of a beetle. Great peril had encompassed me ere now, but never had it grasped me as this did, and paralysed all the powers of my body. Rather would I have stood in the midst of a score of Mexican rovers than thus in the presence of that one man. And yet was not this the very thing for which I had waited, longed, and laboured? I scorned myself for this craven loss of nerve, but that did not enable me to help it. In this benumbed horror I durst not even peep at the doings of my enemy; but presently I became aware that he had moved from the end of the planks (where he stood for some time as calmly as if he had done nothing there), and had passed round the back of the hawthorn tree, and gone down to the place where the body was found, and was making most narrow and minute search there. And now I could watch him without much danger, standing as I did well above him, while his eyes were steadfastly bent downward. And, not content with eyesight only, he seemed to be feeling every blade of grass or weed, every single stick or stone, craning into each cranny of the ground, and probing every clod with his hands. Then, after vainly searching, with the very utmost care, all the space from the hawthorn trunk to the meadow-leet (which was dry as usual), he ran in a fury of impatience to his rod, which he had stuck into the bank, as now I saw, and drew off the butt-end, and removed the wheel, or whatever it is that holds the fishing-line; and this butt had a long spike to it, shining like a halberd in a picture.

This made me shudder; but my spirit was returning, and therewith my power of reasoning, and a deep stir of curiosity. After so many

years, and such a quantity of searching, what could there still be left to seek for, in this haunted and horrible place? And who was the man that was looking for it?

The latter question partly solved itself. It must be the murderer, and no other, whoever he might be among the many black spots of humanity. But as to the other point, no light could be thrown upon it, unless the search should be successful, and perhaps not even then. But now this anxiety, and shame of terror, made me so bold—for I cannot call it brave—that I could not rest satisfied where I was, and instead of blessing every leaf and twig that hid me from the enemy, nothing would do for me but to creep nearer, in spite of that truculent long bright spike.

I thought of my father, and each fibre of my frame seemed to harden with vigour and fleetness. Every muscle of my body could be trusted now. I had always been remarkably light of foot. Could a man of that age catch me? It was almost as much as Firm Gundry could do, as in childish days I had proved to him. And this man, although his hair was not gray, must be on the slow side of fifty now, and perhaps getting short of his very wicked breath. Then I thought of poor Firm, and of good Uncle Sam, and how they scorned poltroonery; and, better still, I thought of that great Power which always had protected me—in a word, I resolved to risk it.

But I had not reckoned upon fire-arms, which such a scoundrel was pretty sure to have; and that idea struck cold upon my valour. Nevertheless I would not turn back. With no more sound than a field-mouse makes in the building of its silken nest, and feet as light as the step of the wind upon the scarcely ruffled grass, I quitted my screen, and went gliding down a hedge, or rather the residue of some old hedge, which would shelter me a little towards the hollow of the banks. I passed low places, where the man must have seen me if he had happened to look up; but he was stooping with his back to me, and working in the hollow of the dry water-trough. He was digging with the long spike of his rod, and I heard the rattle of each pebble that he struck.

Before he stood up again, to ease his back, and to look at the ground which he still had to turn, I was kneeling behind a short close-branched holly, the very last bush of the hedgerow, scarcely fifteen yards from the hawthorn-tree. It was quite impossible to get nearer without coming face to face with him. And now I began again to tremble, but with a great effort conquered it.

The man was panting with his labour, and seemed to be in a vile temper too. He did not swear, but made low noises full of disappointment. And then he caught up his tool, with a savage self-control, and fell to again.

Now was my time to see what he was like, and engrave him on my memory. But lo, in a moment, I need not do that! The face was the bad image of my father's. A lowered, and vicious, and ill-bred image of a noble countenance—such as it was just possible to dream that my dear

father's might have fallen to, if his mind and soul had plunged away from the good inborn and implanted in them. The figure was that of a tall strong man, with shoulders rather slouching, and a habit of keeping his head thrown back, which made a long chin look longer. Altogether he seemed a perilous foe, and perhaps a friend still more perilous.

Be he what he might, he was working very hard. Not one of all Uncle Sam's men, to my knowledge, least of all Martin, would have worked so hard. With his narrow and ill-adapted tool he contrived to turn over, in less than twenty minutes, the entire bed of the meadow-leet, or trough, for a length of about ten yards. Then he came to the mouth, where the water of the main stream lapped back into it, and he turned up the bottom as far as he could reach, and waited for the mud he had raised to clear away. When this had flowed down with the stream, he walked in for some little distance till the pool grew deep, but in spite of all his labour—there was nothing.

Meanwhile the sunset-glow was failing, and a grey autumnal haze crept up the tranquil valley. Shadows waned and faded into dimness more diffuse; and light grew soft, and vague, and vaporous. The gleam of water, and the gloss of grass, and deep relief of trees, began to lose their several phase and mingle into one large twilight blend. And cattle, from their milking-sheds, came lowing for more pasture; and the bark of a shepherd's dog rang quick as if his sheep were drowsy.

In the midst of innocent sights and sounds, that murderer's heart misgave him. He left his vain quest off, and gazed, with fear and hate of nature's beauty, at the change from day to night which had not waited for him. Some touch of his childhood moved him perhaps, some thought of times when he played "I spy," or listened to twilight ghost tales; at any rate, as he rose and faced the evening, he sighed heavily.

Then he strode away; and although he passed me almost within length of his rod, there was little fear of his discovering me, because his mind was elsewhere.

It will, perhaps, be confessed by all who are not as brave as lions, that so far I had acquitted myself pretty well in this trying matter. Horribly scared as I was at first, I had not allowed this to conquer me, but had even rushed into new jeopardy. But now the best part of my courage was spent; and when the tall stranger refixed his rod and calmly recrossed those ominous planks, I durst not set forth on the perilous errand of spying out his ways and tracking him. A glance was enough to show the impossibility in those long meadows of following without being seen, in this stage of the twilight. Moreover, my nerves had been tried too long, and presence of mind could not last for ever. All I could do, therefore, was to creep as far as the trunk of the hawthorn tree, and thence observe that my enemy did not return by the way he had come, but hastened down the dusky valley.

One part of his labours has not been described, though doubtless a highly needful one. To erase the traces of his work, or at least obscure

them to a careless eye : when he had turned as much ground as he thought it worth his while to meddle with, he trod it back again to its level, as nearly as might be, and then (with a can out of his fishing-basket) sluiced the place well with the water of the stream. This made it look to any heedless person who would not descend to examine it, as if there had been nothing more than a little reflux from the river, caused by a flush from the mill-pond. This little stratagem increased my fear of a cunning and active villain.

CHAPTER XLI.

A STRONG TEMPTATION.

Now it will be said, and I also knew, that there was nothing as yet, except most frail and feeble evidence, to connect that nameless stranger with the crime charged upon my father. Indeed it might be argued well, that there was no evidence at all, only inference and suspicion. That, however, was no fault of mine ; and I felt as sure about it as if I had seen him in the very act. And this conclusion was not mine alone ; for Mrs. Busk, a most clever woman, and the one who kept the post-office, entirely agreed with me that there could be no doubt on earth about it.

But when she went on to ask me what it was my intention to do next, for the moment I could do nothing more than inquire what her opinion was. And she told me that she must have a good night's rest before advising anything. For the thought of having such a heinous character in her own delivery district was enough to unhinge her from her postal duties, some of which might be useful to me.

With a significant glance she left me to my own thoughts, which were sad enough, and too sad to be worth recording. For Mrs. Busk had not the art of rousing people, and cheering them, such as Betsy Strouss my old nurse had, perhaps from her knowledge of the nursery. My present landlady might be the more sagacious and sensible woman of the two, and therefore the better adviser ; but for keeping one up to the mark she was not in any way equal to Betsy.

There is no ingratitude in saying this, because she herself admitted it. A clever woman, with a well-balanced mind, knows what she can do, and wherein she fails, better than a man of her own proportion does. And Mrs. Busk often lamented, without much real mortification, that she had not been " born sympathetic."

All the more perhaps for that, she was born sagacious, which is a less pleasing, but in a bitter pinch a more really useful quality. And before I had time to think much of her defects, in the crowd of more important thought—in she came again, with a letter in her hand, and a sparkle of triumph in her small black eyes. After looking back along the passage, and closing my door, she saw that my little bay-window had its old-

fashioned shutters fastened, and then, in a very low whisper, she said,—
“What you want to know is here, Miss.”

“Indeed!” I answered, in my usual voice. “How can you know that? The letter is sealed.”

“Hush! Would you have me ruined for your sake? This was at the bottom of the Nepheton bag. It fell on the floor. That was God’s will, to place it in your power.”

“It is not in my power,” I answered, whispering in my turn, and staring at it, in the strong temptation. “I have no right even to look at it. It is meant for some one else, and sealed.”

“The seal is nothing. I can manage that. Another drop of wax—and I strike our stamp by accident over the breakage. I refuse to know anything about it. I am too busy with the other letters. Five minutes—lock the door—and I will come again.”

This was a desperate conflict for me, worse even than bodily danger. My first impulse was to have nothing to do with it—even to let the letter lie untouched, and, if possible, unglanced at. But already it was too late for the eyes to turn away. The address had flashed upon me before I thought of anything, and while Mrs. Busk held it up to me. And now that address was staring at me, like a contemptuous challenge, while the seal, the symbol of private rights and deterrent honour, lay undermost. The letter was directed to “H. W. C., Post-office, Newport, Sussex.” The writing was in round-hand, and clear, so as not to demand any scrutiny, and to seem like that of a lawyer’s clerk, and the envelope was of thin repellent blue.

My second impulse was to break the letter open and read it without shrinking. Public duty must conquer private scruples. Nothing but the hand of Providence itself could have placed this deadly secret in my power so amazingly. Away with all squeamishness, and perhaps prevent more murder.

But that “perhaps” gave me sudden pause. I had caught up the letter, and stood near the candle, to soften the wax and lift the cover with a small sharp paper-knife, when it flashed on my mind that my cousin would condemn and scorn what I was doing. Unconsciously I must have made him now my standard of human judgment, or what made me think of him at that moment? I threw down the letter, and then I knew. The image of Lord Castlewood had crossed my mind, because the initials were his own—those of Herbert William Castlewood. This strange coincidence—if it were, indeed, an accident—once more set me thinking. Might not this letter be from his agent, of whom he had spoken as my protector here, but to whom as all unseen I scarcely ever gave a thought? Might not young Stixon, who so often was at Bruntsea, be employed to call at Newport for such letters, and return with them to his master? It was not very likely, for my cousin had the strongest contempt of anonymous doings. Still it was possible, and the bare possibility doubled my reluctance to break the seal.

For one minute longer I stood in doubt, and then honour and candour and truth prevailed. If any other life had been in peril but my own, duty to another might have over-ridden all. But duty to oneself, if over pushed in such a case, would hold some taint of cowardice. So I threw the letter, with a sense of loathing, on a chair. Whatever it might contain, it should pass, at least for me, inviolate.

Now when Mrs. Busk came to see what I had done, or rather left undone, she flew into a towering passion, until she had no time to go on with it. The rattle of the rickety old mail-cart, on its way to Winchester that night, was heard, and the horn of the driver as he passed the church.

"Give it me. A' mercy! A young natural, that you are!" the good woman cried, as she fung out of the room, to dash her office stamp upon that hateful missive, and to seal the leathern bag. "Seal indeed! Inviolat! How many seals have I got to make every day of my life!"

I heard a great thump from the corner of the shop, where the business of the mails was conducted; and she told me afterwards that she was so put out, that broken that seal should be,—one way or another. Accordingly she smashed it with the office-stamp, which was rather like a woman's act, methought; and then, having broken it, she never looked inside—which perhaps was even more so.

When she recovered her leisure and serenity, and came in, to forgive me and be forgiven, we resolved to dismiss the moral aspect of the question, as we never should agree about it, although Mrs. Busk was not so certain as she had been, when she found that the initials were the initials of a lord. And then I asked her how she came to fix upon that letter among so many others, and to feel so sure that it came from my treacherous enemy.

"In the first place, I know every letter from Nepheton," she answered, very sensibly. "There are only fourteen people that write letters in the place, and twelve of those fourteen buy their paper in my shop—there is no shop at all at Nepheton. In the next place, none of them could write a hand like that, except the parson and the doctor, who are far above disguise. And two other things made me certain as could be. That letter was written at the 'Green Man' alehouse; not on their paper, nor yet with their ink; but being in great hurry, it was dusted with their sand, a sand that turns red upon ink, Miss. And the time of despatch there is just what he would catch, by walking fast after his dig where you saw him, going in that direction too, and then having his materials ready to save time. And if all that is not enough to convince you, Miss—you remember that you told me our old sexton's tale?"

"To be sure I do. The first evening I was left alone here. And you have been so kind, there is nothing I would hide from you."

"Well, Miss, the time of old Jacob's tale is fixed by the death of poor old Sally Mock; and the stranger came again after you were here, just before the death of the miller's eldest daughter, and you might almost have seen him. Poor thing; we all called her the 'flower of the

Moon,' meaning our little river. What a fine young woman she was, to be sure! Whenever we heard of any strangers about, we thought they were prowling after her. I was invited to her funeral, and I went, and nothing could be done nicer. But they never will be punctual with burials here; they like to dwell on them, and keep the bell going, for the sake of the body, and the souls that must come after it. And so when it was done, I was twenty minutes late for the up-mail and the cross-country post, and had to move my hands pretty sharp, I can assure you. That doesn't matter; I got through it, with the driver of the cart obliging, by means of some beer and cold bacon. But what I feared most was the Nepheton bag, having seen the old man at the funeral, and knowing what they do afterwards. I could not return him 'too late' again, or he would lose his place for certain, and a shilling a day made all the difference to him, between wife and no wife. The old pair without it must go to the workhouse, and never see one another. However, when I was despairing quite of him, up he comes with his bag quite correct, but only one letter to sort in it, and that letter was, Miss, the very identical of the one you held in your hands just now. And a letter as like it as two peas had come when we buried old Sally. It puzzled me then, but I had no clue to it; only now you see, putting this and that together, the things we behold must have some meaning for us; and to let them go without it is against the will of God; especially when at the bottom of the bag."

"If you hear so soon of any stranger in the valley," I asked, to escape the re-opening of the opening question, "how can that man come and go—a man of remarkable stature and appearance—without anybody asking who he is?"

"You scarcely could have put it better, Miss, for me to give the answer. They do ask who he is, and they want to know it, and would like anybody to tell them. But being of a different breed, as they are, from all outside the long valley, speaking also with a different voice, they fear to talk so freely out of their own ways and places. Anything they can learn in and out among themselves, they will learn; but anything out of that they let go, in the sense of outlandish matter. Bless you, Miss, if your poor grandfather had been shot anywhere else in England, how different it would have been for him!"

"For us, you mean, Mrs. Busk. Do you think the man who did it had that in his mind?"

"Not unless he knew the place, as few know it. No, that was an accident of his luck, as many other things have been. But the best luck stops at last, Miss Erema; and unless I am very much mistaken, you will be the stop of his. I shall find out, in a few days, where he came from, where he stayed, and when he went away. I suppose you mean to let him go away?"

"What else am I do?" I asked; "I have no evidence at all against him, only my own ideas. The police would scarcely take it up, even if——"

"Oh, don't talk of them. They spoil everything. And none of our people would say a word, or care to help us, if it came to that. The police are all strangers, and our people hate them. And indeed, I believe that the worst thing ever done was the meddling of that old Jobbins. The old stupe is still alive at Petersfield, and as pompous-headed as ever. My father would have been the man for your sad affair, Miss, if the police had only been invented in his time. Ah yes, he was sharp! Not a Moonstock man—you may take your oath of that, Miss,—but a good honest native from Essex. But he married my mother, a Moonstock woman; or they would not put up with me here at all. You quality people have your ideas to hold by, and despise all others, and reasonable in your opinions; but you know nothing—nothing—nothing—of the stiffness of the people under you."

"How should I know anything of that?" I answered; "all these things are new to me. I have not been brought up in this country, as you know. I come from a larger land, where your stiffness may have burst out into roughness, from having so much room suddenly. But tell me what you think now your father would have done in such a case as mine is?"

"Miss Erema, he was that long-headed that nobody could play leap-frog with him. None of them ever cleared over his barrel. He walked into this village fifty-five years back, this very month, with his spade upon his shoulder and the knowledge of everybody in his eye. They all put up against him, but they never put him down; and in less than three months he went to church, I do assure you, with the only daughter of the only baker. After that he went into the baking line himself; he turned his spade into a shovel, as he said, and he introduced new practices."

"Oh, Mrs. Busk, not adulteration?"

"No, Miss, no! The very last thing he would think of. Only the good use of potatoes in the bread, when flour was frightful bad, and painful dear. What is the best meal of the day, he used to reason Dinner! And why? Why, because of the potatoes! If I can make people take potato for their breakfast, and potato for their supper too, I am giving them three meals a day instead of one. And the health of the village corresponded to it."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Busk, he might have made them do it, by persuasion, or at least with their own knowledge——"

"No, Miss, no! The whole nature of our people, Moonstock or out of it, is never to take victuals by any sort of persuasion. If St. Paul was to come and preach, 'Eat this or that,' all I had of it in the shop would go rotten. They hate any meddling with their likings, and they suspect doctor's rubbish in all of it."

"I am quite of their opinion," I replied; "and I am glad to hear of their independence. I always used to hear that in England none of the poor people dared have a will of their own."

Mrs. Busk lifted up her hands to express amazement at my ignorance, and said that she "must run away, and put the shutters up; or else the policeman would come rapping, and look for a glass of beer, which he had no right to, till it came to the bottom of the firkin; and this one was only tapped last Sunday week. Don't you ever think of the police, Miss?"

Probably this was good advice, and it quite agreed with the opinions of others, and my own impressions as to the arrogant lethargy of "the force," as they call themselves, in my father's case. Mrs. Busk had more activity and intelligence in her little head, than all the fat sergeants and inspectors of the county, helmet, belt, and staff and all.

CHAPTER XLII.

MASTER WITHYPOOL.

At first I was much inclined to run for help, or at least for counsel, either to Lord Castlewood, or to Major Hockin; but further consideration kept me from doing anything of the kind. In the first place, neither of them would do much good; for my cousin's ill-health would prevent him from helping me, even if his strange view of the case did not; while the excellent Major was much too hot and hasty for a delicate task like this. And again, I might lose the most valuable and important of all chances, by being away from the spot just now. And so I remained at Shoxford for awhile, keeping strict watch upon the stranger's haunt, and asking about him by means of Mrs. Busk.

"I have heard more about him, Miss," she said one day, when the down-letters had been despatched, which happened about middle-day. He has been here only those three times this summer, upon excuse of fishing always. He stays at old Wellham, about five miles down the river, where the people are not true Moonites. And one thing that puzzles them is, that although he puts up there simply for the angling, he always chooses times when the water is so low that to catch fish is next to impossible. He left his fishing quarters upon the very day after you saw him searching so; and he spoke as if he did not mean to come again this season. And they say that they don't want him neither, he is such a morose, close-fisted man; and drinking nothing but water, there is very little profit with him."

"And did you find out what his name is? How cleverly you have managed!"

"He passes by the name of 'Captain Brown;' but the landlord of his inn, who has been an old soldier, is sure he was never in the army, nor any other branch of the service. He thinks that he lives by inventing things, for he is always at some experiments, and one of his great points is to make a lamp that will burn and move about under water. To be sure you see the object of that, Miss?"

"No, really, Mrs. Busk, I cannot. I have not your penetration."

"Why, of course, to find what he cannot find upon land. There is something of great importance there, either for its value, or its meaning. Have you ever been told that your poor grandfather wore any diamonds or precious jewels?"

"No. I have asked about that most especially. He had nothing about him to tempt a robber. He was a very strong-willed man, and he hated outward trumpery."

"Then it must be something that this man himself has dropped, unless it were a document, or any other token, missing from his lordship. And few things of that sort would last for twenty years almost."

"Nineteen years, the day after to-morrow," I answered, with a glance at my pocket-book. "I determined to be here on that very day. No doubt I am very superstitious. But one thing I cannot understand is this—what reason can there have been for his letting so many years pass, and then hunting like this?"

"No one can answer that question, Miss, without knowing more than we know. But many reasons might be supposed. He might have been roving abroad, for instance, just as you and your father have been. Or he might not have known that the thing was there; or it might not have been of importance, till lately. Or he might have been afraid, until something else happened. Does he know that you are now in England?"

"How can I possibly tell, Mrs. Busk? He seems to know a great deal too much. He found me out when I was at Colonel Gundry's. At least I conclude so, from what I know now, but I hope he does not know,"—and at such a dreadful idea, I shuddered.

"I am almost sure that he cannot know it," the good post-mistress answered; "or he would have found means to put an end to you. That would have been his first object."

"But, Mrs. Busk," I said, being much disturbed by her calmness; "surely, surely he is not to be allowed to make an end of every one! I came to this country with the full intention of going into everything. But I did not mean at all, except in my very best moments, to sacrifice myself. It seems too bad—too bad to think of."

"So it is, Miss Erema," Mrs. Busk replied, without any congenial excitement; "it does seem hard for them that have the liability on them. But still, Miss, you have always shown such a high sense of duty, and of what you were about——"

"I can't, I cannot. There are times, I do assure you, when I am fit for nothing, Mrs. Busk, and wish myself back in America. And if this man is to have it all his own way——"

"Not he, Miss. Not he. Be you in no hurry. Could he even have his way with our old miller? No, Master Withypool was too many for him."

"That is a new thing. You never told me that. What did he try to do with the miller?"

"I don't justly know what it was, Miss Erema; I never spoke to miller about it; and indeed I have had no time since I heard of it. But those that told me said that the tall strange gentleman was terribly put out, and left the gate with a black cloud upon his face, and the very next day the miller's daughter died, quite sudden and mysterious."

"How very strange! But now I have got a new idea. Has the miller a strong high dam to his pond? And a good stout sluice-gate at the end?"

"Yes, Miss, to be sure he has," said Mrs. Busk; "otherwise how could he grind at all, when the river is so low as it is sometimes?"

"Then I know what he wanted; and I will take a leaf out of his own book—the miscreant! He wanted the miller to stop back the water, and leave the pool dry at the 'Murder-bridge.' Would it be possible for him to do that?"

"I cannot tell you, Miss; but your thought is very clever. It is likely enough that he did want that; though he never would dare to ask without some pretence,—some other cause I mean, to show for it. He may have been thinking that whatever he was wanting was likely to be under water. And that shows another thing, if it is so."

"Mrs. Busk, my head goes round, with such a host of complications. I do my best to think them out,—and then there comes another!"

"No, Miss; this only clears things up a little. If the man cannot be sure whether what he is looking for is on land, or under water, it seems to me almost to show that it was lost at the murder-time, in the dark and flurry. A man would know, if he dropped anything in the water by daylight, from the splash and the ripple, and so on, for the stream is quite slow at that corner. He dropped it, Miss, when he did the deed; or else it came away from his lordship."

"Nothing was lost, as I said before, from the body of my grandfather; so far at least as our knowledge goes. Whatever was lost was the murderer's. Now please to tell me all about the miller, and how I may get round him."

"You make me laugh in the middle of black things, Miss, by the way you have of putting them. But as to the miller,—Master Withypool is a wonder, as concerns the ladies. He is one of those men that stand up for everything, when a man tries upper side of them. But let a woman come, and get up under, and there he is—a piecrust lifted. Why I, at my age, could get round him, as you call it. But you, Miss—and more than that, you are something like his daughter; and the old man frets after her terrible. Go you into his yard, and just smile upon him, Miss; and if the Moon-river can be stopped, he'll stop it for you."

This seemed a very easy way to do it. But I told Mrs. Busk that I would pay well also, for the loss of a day's work at the mill was more than fifty smiles could make up.

But she told me, above all things, not to do that. For old Master Withypool was of that sort that he would stand for an hour with his

hands in his pocket, for a halfpenny, if not justly owing from him. But nothing more angered him than a bribe to step outside of his duty. He had plenty of money, and was proud of it. But sooner would he lose a day's work, to do a kindness, when he was sure of having right behind it, than take a week's profit without earning it. And very likely that was where the dark man failed, from presuming that money would do everything. However, there was nothing like judging for oneself; and if I would like to be introduced, she could do it for me with the best effect; taking as she did a good hundred-weight of best "households" from him every week, although not herself in the baking line, but always keeping quartern bags, because the new baker did adulterate so.

I thought of her father, and how things work round; but that they would do without remarks of mine. So I said nothing on that point, but asked whether Master Withypool would require any introduction. And to this Mrs. Busk said, 'Oh, dear no!' And her throat had been a little rough since Sunday, and the dog was chained tight, even if any dog would bite a sweet young lady; and to her mind the miller would be more taken up, and less fit to vapour into obstacles, if I were to hit upon him all alone, just when he came out to the bank of his cabbage-garden, not so very long after his dinner, to smoke his pipe and to see his things a-growing.

It was time to get ready if I meant to catch him then, for he always dined at one o'clock, and the mill was some three or four meadows up the stream; therefore as soon as Mrs. Busk had re-assured me that she was quite certain of my enemy's departure, I took my drawing things, and set forth to call upon Master Withypool.

Passing through the churchyard, which was my nearest way, and glancing sadly at the "fairy ring," I began to have some uneasiness about the possible issue of my new scheme. Such a thing required more thinking out than I had given to it. For instance, what reason could I give the miller for asking so strange a thing of him? And how could the whole of the valley be hindered from making the greatest talk about the stoppage of their own beloved Moon, even if the Moon could be stopped without every one of them rushing down to see it? And if it was so talked of, would it not be certain to come to the ears of that awful man? And if so, how long before he found me out, and sent me to rejoin my family?

These thoughts compelled me to be more discreet; and having lately done a most honourable thing, in refusing to read that letter, I felt a certain right to play a little trick now, of a purely harmless character. I ran back therefore to my writing-desk, and took from its secret drawer a beautiful golden American eagle, a large coin, larger and handsomer than any in the English coinage. Uncle Sam gave it to me, on my birthday; and I would not have taken 50*l*. for it. With this I hurried to that bridge of fear, which I had not yet brought myself to go across; and

then, not to tell any story about it, I snipped a little hole in the corner of my pocket, while my hand was still steady ere I had to mount the bridge. Then pinching that hole up with a squeeze, I ran, and got upon that wicked bridge, and then let go. The heavy gold coin fell upon the rotten plank, and happily rolled into the water, as if it were glad not to tempt its makers to any more sin, for the sake of it.

Shutting up thought, for fear of despising myself for the coinage of such a little trick, I hurried across the long meadow to the mill, and went through the cow-gate into the yard, and the dog began to bark at me. Seeing that he had a strong chain on, I regarded him with lofty indignation. "Do you know what Jowler would do to you?" I said; "Jowler, a dog worth ten of you. He would take you by the neck, and drop you into that pond, for daring to insult his mistress!" The dog appeared to feel the force of my remarks; for he lay down again, and with one eye watched me, in a manner amusing, but insidious. Then taking good care to keep out of his reach, I went to the mill-pond, and examined it.

It looked like a very nice pond indeed, long, and large, and well banked up, not made into any particular shape, but producing little rushy elbows. The water was now rather low, and very bright (though the Moon itself is not a crystal stream), and a school of young minnows, just watching a water-spider with desirous awe, at sight of me broke away, and reunited, with a speed and precision that might shame the whole of our very best modern fighting. Then many other things made a dart away, and furrowed the shadow of the willows; till distance quieted the fear of man—that most mysterious thing in nature—and the shallow pool was at peace again, and bright with unruffled reflections.

"What ails the dog?" said a deep gruff voice, and the poor dog received a contemptuous push, not enough to hurt him, but to wound his feelings, for doing his primary duty. "Servant, Miss! What can I do for you? Footpath is t'other side of that there hedge."

"Yes, but I left the footpath on purpose. I came to have a talk with you, if you will allow me."

"Sartain! sartain!" the miller replied, lifting a broad floury hat and showing a large grey head. "Will you come into house, Miss, or into gearden?"

I chose the garden, and he led the way, and set me down upon an old oak bench, where the tinkle of the water through the flood-gates could be heard.

"So you be come to paint the mill at last," he said. "Many a time I've looked out for you. The young ledly down to Mother Busk's, of course. Many's the time we've longed for you to come, you reminds us so of somebody. Why, my old missus can't set eyes on you in church, Miss, without being forced to sit down a'most. But we thought it very pretty of you not to come, Miss, while the trouble was so new upon us."

Something in my look or voice made the old man often turn away, while I told him that I would make the very best drawing of his mill that I could manage, and would beg him to accept it.

"Her ought to a'been on the plank," he said, with trouble in getting his words out. "But there—what good? Her never will stand on that plank no more. No, nor any other plank."

I told him that I would put her on the plank, if he had any portrait of her, showing her dress and her attitude. Without saying what he had, he led me to the house, and stood behind me, while I went inside. And then he could not keep his voice, as I went from one picture of his darling to another, not thinking (as I should have done) of what his feelings might be; but trying, as no two were at all alike, to extract a general idea of her.

"Nobody knows what her were to me," the old man said, with a quiet little noise, and a sniff behind my shoulder. "And with one day's illness, her died—her died."

"But you have others left. She was not the only one. Please, Mr. Withypool, to try to think of that. And your dear wife still alive, to share your trouble. Just think for a moment of what happened to my father. His wife and six children all swept off in a month—and I just born, to be brought up with a bottle!"

I never meant, of course, to have said a word of this; but was carried away by that common old idea of consoling great sorrow with a greater one. And the sense of my imprudence broke vexatiously upon me, when the old man came and stood between me and his daughter's portraits.

"Well, I never!" he exclaimed, with his bright eyes steadfast with amazement. "I know you now, Miss. Now I knows you. To think what a set of blind newts us must be! And you the very moral of your poor father, in a female kind of way! To be sure, how well I knew the Captain! A nicer man never walked the earth, neither a more unlucky one."

"I beg you—let me beg you," I began to say; "since you have found me out like this——"

"Hush, Miss, hush! Not my own wife shall know, unless your own tongue telleth her. A proud man I shall be, Miss Raumur," he continued with emphasis on my local name, "if aught can be found in my power to serve you. Why, Lord bless you, Miss," he whispered, looking round, "your father and I has spent hours together! He were that pleasant in his ways and words, he would drop in from his fishing, when the water was too low, and sit on that very same bench where you sat, and smoke his pipe with me, and tell me about battles, and ask me about bread. And many a time I have slipped up the gate, to give him more water for his flies to play, and the fish not to see him so plainly. Ah, we have had many pleasant spells together; and his eldest boy and girl, Master George, and Miss Henrietta, used to come and fetch

our eggs. My Polly then was in love with him, we said; she sat upon his lap so, when she were two years old, and played with his beautiful hair, and blubbered—oh she did blubber, when the Captain went away!"

This invested Polly with new interest for me, and made me determine to spare no pains in putting her pretty figure well upon the plank. Then I said to the miller, "How kind of you to draw up your sluice-gates to oblige my father! Now will you put them down and keep them down, to do a great service both to him and me?"

Without a moment's hesitation he promised that anything he could do should be done, if I would only tell him what I wanted. But perhaps it would be better to have our talk outside. Taking this hint, I followed him back to the bench in the open garden, and there explained what I wished to have done, and no longer concealed the true reason. The good miller answered that with all his heart he would do that much to oblige me, and a hundred times more than that; but some little thought and care were needful. With the river so low as it was now, he could easily stop the back-water, and receive the whole of the current in his dam, and keep it from flowing down his wheel-trough, and thus dry the lower channel for perhaps half-an-hour, which would be ample for my purpose. Engineering difficulties there were none; but two or three other things must be heeded. Miller Sims, a mile or so down river, must be settled with, to fill his dam well, and begin to discharge, when the upper water failed; so as not to dry the Moon all down the valley, which would have caused a commotion. Miller Sims being own brother-in-law to Master Withypool, that could be arranged easily enough, after one day's notice. But a harder thing to manage would be to do the business without rousing curiosity, and setting abroad a rumour which would be sure to reach my enemy. And the hardest thing of all, said Master Withypool, smiling as he thought of what himself had once been, would be to keep those blessed boys away, who find out everything, and go everywhere. Not a boy of Shoxford but would be in the river, or dancing upon its empty bed, screeching and scolloping up into his cap any poor bewildered trout chased into the puddles, if it were allowed to leak out, however feebly, that the Moon water was to stop running. And then how was I to seek for anything?

This was a puzzle. But, with counsel, we did solve it. And we quietly stopped the Moon, without man or boy being much the wiser.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GOING TO THE BOTTOM.

It is not needful to explain everything, any more than it was for me to tell the miller about my golden eagle, and how I had managed to lose it in the Moon—a trick of which now I was heartily ashamed, in the face of honest kindness. So I need not tell how Master Withypool managed

to settle with his men, and to keep the boys unwitting of what was about to come to pass. Enough that I got a note from him to tell me that the little river would be run out, just when all Shoxford was intent upon its dinner, on the second day after I had seen him. And he could not say for certain, but thought it pretty safe, that nobody would come near me, if I managed to be there, at a quarter before one, when the stream would begin to run dry, and I could watch it. I sent back a line by the pretty little girl, a sister of poor Polly, to say how much I thanked him, and how much I hoped that he himself would meet me there, if his time allowed. For he had been too delicate to say a word of that; but I felt that he had a good right to be there, and, knowing him now, I was not afraid.

Nearly everything came about as well as could be wished almost. Master Withypool took the precaution, early in the morning, to set his great fierce bull at large, who always stopped the footpath. This bull knew well the powers of a valley in conducting sound; and he loved to stand, as if at the mouth of a funnel, and roar down it, to another bull, a mile below him, belonging to his master's brother-in-law. And when he did this, there was scarcely a boy, much less a man or woman, with any desire to assert against him the public right of thoroughfare. Throughout that forenoon then, this bull bellowed nobly, still finding many very wicked flies about: so that two mitching boys, who meant to fish for minnows with a pin, were obliged to run away again.

However, I was in the dark about him, and as much afraid of him as anybody, when he broke into sight of me round a corner, without any tokens of amity. I had seen a great many great bulls before, including Uncle Sam's good black one, who might not have meant any mischief at all, and atoned for it—if he did—by being washed away so.

And therefore my courage soon returned, when it became quite clear that this animal now had been fastened with a rope and could come no nearer. For some little time then I waited all alone, as near that bridge as I could bring myself to stand, for Mrs. Busk, my landlady, could not leave the house yet, on account of the mid-day letters. Moreover, she thought that she had better stay away, as our object was to do things as quietly as could be.

Much as I had watched this bridge from a distance, or from my sheltering-place, I had never been able to bring myself to make any kind of sketch of it, or even to insert it in a landscape: although it was very well suited and expressive, from its crooked and antique simplicity. The overhanging also of the hawthorn tree (not ruddy yet, but russety with its colouring crop of coral) and the shaggy freaks of ivy above the twisted trunk, and the curve of the meadows and bold elbow of the brook, were such as an artist would have pitched his tent for, and tantalised poor London people with a dream of cool repose.

As yet the little river showed no signs of doing what the rustic—or surely it should have been the cockney—was supposed to stand still and wait for. There was no great rush of headlong water, for that is not

the manner of the stream in the very worst of weather ; but there was the usual style of coming on, with lips and steps at the sides, and cords of running towards the middle. Quite enough at any rate to make the trout jump, without any omen of impending drought, and to keep all the play and the sway of movement going on serenely.

I began to be afraid that the miller must have failed in his stratagem against the water-god, and that, as I had read in Pope's Homer, the liquid deity would beat the hero ; when all of a sudden there were signs that man was the master of this little rustic. Broad swords of flag and rapiers of water-grass, which had been quivering merrily, began to hang down and to dip themselves in loops ; and the stones of the brink showed dark green stripes on their sides, as they stood naked. Then fine little cakes of conglomerated stuff, which only a great man of nature could describe, came floating about, and curdling into corners, and holding on to one another in long-tailed strings. But they might do what they liked, and make their very best of it, as they fell away to nothing upon stones and mud. For now more important things began to open, the like of which never had been yielded up before ; plots of slimy gravel, varied with long streaks of yellow mud, dotted with large double shells, and parted into little oozy runs by wriggling water-weeds. And here was great commotion and sad panic of the fish, large fellows splashing and quite jumping out of water, as their favourite hovers and shelves ran dry, and darting away with their poor backs in the air, to the deepest hole they could think of. Hundreds must have come to flour, lard, and butter, if boys had been there to take advantage. But luckily things had been done so well that boys were now in their least injurious moment, destroying nothing worse than their own dinners.

A very little way below the old wooden bridge, the little river ran into a deepish pool, as generally happens at or near a corner, especially where there is a confluence sometimes. And seeing nothing, as I began to search intently, stirring with a long-handled spud which I had brought, I concluded that even my golden eagle had been carried into that deep place. However, water or no water, I resolved to have it out with that dark pool, as soon as the rest of the channel should be drained, which took a tormenting time to do ; and having thick boots on, I pinned up my skirts, and jumping down into the shoals, began to paddle, in a fashion which reminded me of childish days passed pleasantly in the Blue River.

Too busy thus to give a thought to any other thing, I did not even see the miller, until he said—

"Good day, Miss," lifting his hat, with a nice kind smile ; "very busy, Miss, I see, and right you are to be so. The water will be upon us again in less than half-an-hour. Now let me clear away they black weeds for you. I brought this little shivel a'purpose. If I may make so bold, Miss, what do'e look to find here?"

"I have not the very smallest notion," I could only answer ; "but if there is anything, it must be in that hole. I have searched all the

shallow part so closely that I doubt whether even a sixpence could escape me, unless it were buried in the mud or pebbles. Oh how can I manage to search that hole; there must be a yard of water there?"

"One thing I ought to have told'e for to do," Master Withypool whispered, as he went on shovelling—"to do what the boys do when they lose a farden—to send another after 'un. If so be now, afore the water was run out, you had stood on that there bridge and dropped a bright coin into it, a new half-crown, or a two-shilling piece, why the chances would be that the run of the current would a' taken it nigh to the likeliest spot for holding any other little matter as might a' dropped, per-miskous you might say, into this same water."

"I have done so," I answered, "I have done that very thing, though not at all with that object. The day before yesterday a beautiful coin, a golden eagle of America, fell from my pocket on that upper plank, and rolled into the water. I would not lose it for a great deal, because it was given to me by my dearest friend, the greatest of all millers."

"And ha'n't you found it yet, Miss? Well, that is queer. Perhaps we shall find it now, with something to the back of it. I thought yon hole was too far below the bridge. But there your gold must be, and something else most likely. Plaise to wait a little bit, and us'll have the wet out of 'un. I never should a' thought of that but for your gold guinea, though."

With these words Master Withypool pulled his coat off, and rolled up his shirt-sleeves, displaying arms fit to hold their own even with Uncle Sam's almost; and then he fell to with his shovel and dug, while I ran, with my little spud, to help.

"Plaise keep out of way, Miss; I be afeard of knocking you. Not but what you works very brave, indeed, Miss."

Knowing what men are concerning "female efforts," I got out of the strong man's way, although there was plenty of room for me. What he wanted to do was plain enough—to dig a trench down the empty bed of the Moon river, deep enough to drain that pit, before the stream came down again.

"Never thought to run a race against my own old dam," he said, as he stopped for a moment to recover breath. "Us never knows what us may have to do. Old dam must be a'most busting now. But her's sound enough, till her beginneth to run over."

I did not say a word, because it might have done some mischief; but I could not help looking rather anxiously upstream, for fear of the water coming down with a rush, as it very soon must do. Master Withypool had been working, not as I myself would have done, from the lips of the dark pit downward; but from a steep run some twenty yards below, where there was almost a little cascade, when the river was full flowing; from this he had made his channel upward, cutting deeper as he came along, till now at the brink of the obstinate pool, his trench was two feet deep almost. I had no idea that any man could work so with a

shovel, which seems such a clumsy tool compared with a spade: but a gentleman who knows the country and the people, told me that, with their native weapon, Moonites will do as much digging in an hour as other folk get through in an hour and a half with a spade. But this may be only, perhaps, because they are working harder.

"Now," said Master Withypool at last, standing up, with a very red face, and desiring to keep all that unheeded; "now, Miss, to you it belongeth to tap this here little cornder, if desirable. Plaise to excoose of me going up of bank to tell 'e when the wet cometh down again."

"Please to do nothing of the sort," I answered, knowing that he offered to stand out of sight from a delicate dread of intrusion; "please to tap the pool yourself, and stay here, as a witness of what we find in it."

"As you please, Miss, as you please. Not a moment for to lose in arguing. Harken now, the water is a-topping of our dam. Her will be here in five minutes."

With three or four rapid turns of his shovel, which he spun almost as fast as a housemaid spins a mop, he fetched out the plug of earth severing his channel from the deep reluctant hole. And then I saw the wisdom of his way of working, for if he had dug downward from the pool itself, the water would have followed him all the way, and even drowned his tool out of its own strokes. Whereas now with a swirl and a curl of ropy mud, away rushed the thick, sluggish, obstinate fluid: and in less than two minutes the hole was almost dry.

The first thing I saw was my golden eagle, lodged about half way down the slope, on a crust of black sludge, from which I caught it up, and presented it to Master Withypool, as a small token and record of his kindness; and, to this day, he carries it upon his Sunday watch-chain.

"I always am lucky in finding things," I exclaimed, while he watched me, and the upstream too, whence a babble of water was approaching; "as sure as I live I have found it!"

"No doubt about your living, Miss. And the Captain were always lively. But what have your bright eyes hit upon? I see nort for the life of me."

"Look there," I cried, "at the very bottom of it—almost under the water. Here, where I put my spud—a bright blue line! Oh, can I go down, or is it quicksand?"

"No quicksand in our little river, Miss. But your father's daughter shannot go into the muck, while John Withypool stands by. I see un now, sure enough; now I see un! But her needeth care, or her may all goo away in mullock. Well, I thought my eyes was sharp enough; but I'm blest if I should have spied that though. A bit of flint, mebbe, or of blue glass bottle. Anyhow, us will see the bottom of un."

He was wasting no time while he spoke, but working steadfastly for his purpose, fixing the blade of his shovel below the little blue line I was peering at, so that no slip of the soft yellow slush should bury it down, and plunge over it. If that had once happened, good-bye to

all chance of ever beholding this thing again, for the river was coming with fury and foam, to assert its ancient right of way.

With a short laugh the miller jumped down into the pit. "Me to be served so, by my own mill-stream! Lor', if I don't pay you out for this!"

His righteous wrath failed to stop the water from pouring into the pit behind him; and, strong as he was, he nearly lost his footing, having only mud to stand upon. It seemed to me that he was going to be drowned, and I offered him the handle of my spud to help him; but he stopped where he was, and was not going to be hurried.

"I got un now," he said; "now I don't mind coming out. You see if I don't pay you out for this! Why, I always took you for a reasonable hanimal!"

He shook his fist strongly at the river, which had him well up to the middle by this time; and then he disdainfully waded out, with wrath in all his countenance.

"I've a great mind to stop there, and see what her would do," he said to me, forgetting altogether what he went for. "And I would, if I had had my dinner. A scat of a thing as I can manage with my thumb! Ah, you have made a bad day of it."

"But what have you found, Mr. Withypool?" I asked, for I could not enter into his wrath against the water, wet as he was to the shoulders. "You have something in your hand. May I see it, if you please? And then do please to go home, and change your clothes."

"A thing I never did in my life, Miss; and should be ashamed to begin at this age. Clothes gets wet, and clothes dries on us, same as un did on the sheep afore us; else they gets stiff and creasy. What this little thing is ne'er abody may tell, in my line of life—but look'th aristocratic."

The "mullock," as he called it, from his hands, and from the bed where it had lain so long, so crusted the little thing which he gave me, that I dipped it again in the swelling stream, and rubbed it with both hands, to make out what it was. And then I thought how long it had lain there; and suddenly to my memory it came, that in all likelihood the time of that was nineteen years this very day.

"Will another year pass," I cried, "before I make out all about it? What are you, and who, now looking at me with such sad, sad eyes?"

For I held in my hand a most handsome locket, of blue enamel and diamonds, with a back of chased gold, and in front the miniature of a beautiful young woman, done as they never seem to do them now. The work was so good, and the fitting so close, that no drop of water had entered, and the face shone through the crystal glass as fresh as the day it was painted. A very lovely face it was, yet touched with a shade of sadness, as the loveliest faces generally are; and the first thought of any beholder would be—"that woman was born for sorrow."

The miller said as much, when I showed it to him.

"Lord bless my heart! I hope the poor cratur' hathn't lasted half so long as her pictur' bath."

